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THE MYSTERY OF THE ISLAND

THE

MYSTERY OF THE ISLAND

BY

HENRY KINGSLEY,

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CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

A MORE charming, happy, or united family than that of the Smythes did not exist in England. We shall have more to say hereafter in detail concerning the various members of it, and their various wonderful adventures (including those of Miss Matilda Smythe, the youngest, which were not the least remarkable), but all we desire to do now is to give an account of them as a whole, with fuller details of only two of the group, the father and the only son, Clare.

The affection which each of the others bore for one another was intensified on these two, though they were only seen at rare, glad intervals, and seldom together; by this you will guess that they followed the same profession in different places; they did so, and their profession was the sea.

Captain Smythe was one of the best officers in her Majesty's service, one whose splendid character had made interest, and who was therefore never without a ship. Like Captain Strong, when asked where he had served, he might reply, "Where have I not served?" His absences, therefore, were of a very lengthened character, but he looked forward to the time when he would settle on shore with a comfortable competency, and leave to his son Clare the legacy of an unblemished name, and the duty of seeing the Union Jack respected on every sea.

Mrs. Smythe in her inmost heart had at one time hoped that Clare might have taken to some pursuit on shore, but that hope very early died out, and she relinquished it without a murmur.

The child made ships out of chairs, and took his sisters long voyages to distant climes before he could pronounce their names; the boy rigged ships and repudiated Latin, sticking merely to mathematics, which he devoured eagerly at a very early age. One day, when he was nine years old, his father came back from the First Lord's levée in full uniform, with the gallantly-earned star of a Commander of the Bath on his breast.

That was the last thing that determined his fate for ever. The next time Captain Smythe went to sea poor Mrs. Smythe had to take a double farewell. She saw her husband wave farewell from the frigate's side at Spithead, and she saw the gates of the Royal Naval College at Portsmouth close upon her only son. She went silently weeping home to her daughters and bided her time.

When only half of her weary watch was done, there came rumours of war, and then war itself deadly and fierce, with plague and famine for its concomitants, came on. This had happened to her before, and she knew that it must happen again, so she waited in dumb patience, expecting the death stroke every hour.

It never came, the ship came back when the too tardy victory was gained, and when Captain Smythe, looking a little older, and a little greyer, sailed into the Solent, the first person who came up the ship's side by a rope which was thrown to the leaping boat, was a smart young naval cadet, with a distinction of a pretty sword —the cut of which Captain Smythe knew well, for he had once won it himself; it was the sword presented to

the most promising cadet of the year, and it was worn by his own son Clare.

Captain Smythe was too experienced to take his own son with himself on his first voyage; he got him on board a friend's ship. He had himself formed so many successful officers, that he had no difficulty in finding the man he wanted; of all his pupils, Commander Killick was the favourite. This officer was very rich, yet he stuck to his profession with an enthusiasm which gained him the high respect of Captain Smythe, and all the officers of his thoughtful and improving school. Clare was therefore sent to sea with him.

Although very carefully watched, he was kept quite at a distance by Captain Killick for a long time; once, however, there was a rather protracted stay at Southampton, and after this Killick's manner towards Clare changed in a most remarkable way. He had done his duty by Clare before, but now he seemed to take a fresh interest in him. He revived all Clare's previous enthusiasm for the service, which may possibly have somewhat waned under the influence of reality, and the absence of earnestness in many of the shipmates of his

own age, among some of whom had crept in the miserable affectation of considering duty as a bore. But Killick did more than this, he made a friend of Clare to the utmost extent which their different stations would allow, and seemed determined, as he expressed it once, to "make a man of Clare, as Clare's father had made a man of him."

The reason of this slightly-deferred determination will soon appear. He, however, persevered in it, and at sixteen Clare was as advanced an officer as any in the navy of his age, with a splendid character for gallantry, having accomplished one rescue from drowning entirely alone, and having assisted at two others.

Returning home Clare found his father on shore, and the whole family had a delightful summer. Captain Killick did not join them, his time was entirely taken up with his mother, his sisters, and the affairs of his large estate. The midshipman was incessant in his praises of that officer, and his father was greatly pleased with his enthusiasm, encouraging him to dwell on that theme very often, more often, perhaps, than he would have done had he known everything.

It was the last summer which they spent together before the dark times which were coming upon them, and they remembered it long: the leaves had scarcely left the trees, when Captain Smythe announced, at breakfast-time, that he was appointed to the new frigate *War-hawk*, and that his time was again getting short. There was to be another separation, but they were prepared for it. Clare seemed to feel it more than anyone.

The next morning came the *Times*, as usual, and after a mere glance at it, Captain Smythe handed it to Clare, with a singular expression; Clare glanced at a part of it he knew well—the naval and military intelligence—and, giving a wild shout, ran round the table, threw his arms round his father's neck. He had read his own name at the head of the list of midshipmen appointed to the *War-hawk*. The great hope of his life was realized —at last he was to sail with his father.

"Yes," said Captain Smythe, "we are together now, my boy. You have come out of your apprenticeship well—bravely—nobly, and you have all the reward which I can give you at present."

Who can describe the delight of the family at this

arrangement! Clare would be with his father, and no ill could possibly come to him then. Mrs. Smythe said that now she had but one anxiety instead of two—her husband and son would be together, and that her care was reduced by one half.

Mrs. Smythe probably never heard that quaint old proverb about putting all your eggs in one basket.

The *War-hawk* had been away ten months, when the thunderbolt came. Mrs. Smythe one morning quietly folded up the *Times*, and left the room. When she came back again, she was quite quiet, and dressed for walking. She said, "I shall not be long," and went out.

She had read in the *Times*, in large letters:—"Loss of H.M.S. *War-hawk*.—A boat containing the purser and ten seamen of H.M.S. *War-hawk*, has arrived at Buenos Ayres, reporting the total loss of this fine ship, with, it is too much feared, the whole of the ship's complement, excepting the following, who had reached the above-named port shortly before the mail sailed."

Then followed the names of the purser and fourteen seamen.

Such was the *published* telegram from Lisbon. They might know more at the Admiralty: it was not very far, and, with a swift, steady step, she sped there through the roaring streets.

CHAPTER II.

THE ADMIRALTY AT SEA.

THE Admiralty! Who does not know the dull, handsome façade, with the screen separating the quiet courtyard from the noisy Parliament Street? It is a solemn place in the brightest sunshine, but it gets absolutely awful when you reflect about the intelligence which passes through those doors, and so out into the world: such as that of Trafalgar, the maddened town reads, "It has pleased Almighty God to bless her Majesty's arms with an unprecedented victory;" and again, "The *Captain* has capsized and sunk, with all hands, in the Bay of Biscay." More glorious naval bulletins have been issued from that dingy building than all the nations of the earth put together can show; yet even when the city is wildest in its joys, bent forms may be seen coming forth, with faces trying to hide their

grief, amidst the boisterous rejoicing around them. Not for them is the triumph of the hour: their portion of the victory is the darkened house, the straitened means possibly, and the memory of the most dearly loved and most often absent member of the family lost to them for ever in the cruel sea.

Behind the Admiralty, facing St. James's Park, but separated from it by a wall, is a little secret garden, to which officers of a certain rank have access from the *place des armes* in front of the Horse Guards. In this little garden, which in spring is full of flowers, naval officers meet and discuss the service generally—not always in a complimentary manner, for it is notorious that our maritime service is always going to the deuce, but has not as yet succeeded in getting there.

On a certain spring morning there were more officers in that little garden than usual. They were talking eagerly together in the centre of the grass plat, and they were not disagreeing or quarrelling very much, as is sometimes the case. They were nearly perfectly unanimous. Admiral Romans gave the key-note to the opinion of the others, when he said—

"It comes to this, and to nothing else: the bar at St. Juan is fourteen feet—not fourteen fathoms; that I will swear to."

A young commander said—

"It is neither the one nor the other; for the fact of the case is, that there is no bar at St. Juan."

"Then, sir," said Admiral Romans, "how on earth did Smythe manage to lose his ship?"

"*I* don't know," said the young commander. "I wish that some one would give *me* a chance of losing one."

"Very good, sir," said Admiral Romans; "then don't talk to me."

"I was not talking to you at all," said the young commander; "I was talking to an imaginary Admiralty."

Admiral Romans was appeased: he had his grievances, and aired them too, although he was a sea lord. The conversation continued.

"Well," said a Rear-Admiral, "the ship is gone, and all the men with her. It is a most lamentable pity: we could have got other men, even other officers, but can we get another Smythe?"

"I don't agree with you there," said Admiral Romans. "He was a queer fellow, and half-sick of the service; and I hate a man who hates the service."

"How did he show his hatred to it?" said the Rear-Admiral.

"In many ways," said Admiral Romans. "He wanted to be eternally at sea, and he wanted to get Her Majesty's permission to join the Turkish service."

"Well," said the young commander, "he got one of his wishes, for he was always afloat. I wish I was. Don't you think that you are rather illogical, Admiral Romans?"

"By no means, sir," said Admiral Romans—one of the best officers and men we have, but with no powers of debate—"a man who hates the service always wishes to be afloat."

"Well, I cannot for the life of me see that," said the young commander.

"When you are as old as I am, sir," said Admiral Romans, "you will pos———"

He never went any further. His opinions on the subject may be modified now, but they were never

delivered then. Admiral Romans was, to use a vulgarism, cock of the walk there; at the moment when he was putting down the young commander he was as proud as if he had been sailing into Plymouth after a successful cruise. Immediately afterwards he wished himself in a westerly gale in the Straits of Magellan, or even in a typhoon in the China seas, with less than twenty miles sea-room.

His comrades fell away from him and retired to various parts of the garden. Men who would have risked their lives, their ships, and their professional honour for him, deserted him now. Had the First Lord himself come into that garden and asked for volunteers for an arctic or antarctic expedition, involving three years' seclusion from the world, on a diet of pemmican, he would have been mobbed by every officer there. All they asked was for service, danger, and honour. Yet Vice-Admiral Romans found himself deserted by them and left alone in the middle of the grass plat. He said with emphasis that they were a parcel of skulking cowards, and that the service was going to the mischief.

He, however, said that he was a sailor of the old school, though the sailors of the new school are every whit as brave. It was his duty to face the enemy alone, with a certainty of defeat, and so he did it. He double-shotted his guns and nailed his colours to the mast. He was horribly frightened, like the comrades who had fled, but it was impossible for him to show it. So with his knees shaking he prepared for the onslaught of the enemy.

What enemy was that who had made a dozen or more of the bravest men in the world hide in the shrubberies, and get back into the building by secret doors? Only a very beautiful woman, who had passed through the Admiralty, had come out on the top of the steps, and was looking around her.

She saw Admiral Romans, and descended towards him. He met her with the calmness of despair.

"Dear admiral," she said, "what is this about the *War-hawk?*"

He thought that he would prepare her for the truth by degrees. He thought that he would have said that sailors' wives must be prepared for all contingencies;

that we were all in the hands of Providence, and so on. But he, unfortunately, looked at her before he began his speech, and so he never made it.

She looked so beautiful and so patient, that he could not speak. His great chest heaved and his face was flushed, yet never a word did he utter.

"Am I a widow?" she said quietly.

Still no answer from him. He would have faced grim death with his worst terrors, but the silent woman made a coward of him. He would have given his own coxswain two dozen and have eaten his dinner afterwards, but this woman was too much for him. She only read his answer in his eyes.

"Is my son drowned also?" she asked.

He was forced to speak now. "Madam," he said, "I fear that such is the case."

"There is no dishonour attached to either of them?" she asked.

"Oh, no," he said, "it is far otherwise. The *War-hawk* is lost, the purser and fourteen men have reached Buenos Ayres. Poor Smythe remained to the very last, with your son. I cannot tell you how terribly

it grieves me to say this to you, Mrs. Smythe; but there is actually no hope whatever."

So she turned and walked quietly away, while Admiral Romans said, "Thank heaven, that is over!" and the various officers came out from the shubberies, all agreeing that Mrs. Smythe had received her doom like a brave woman.

CHAPTER III.

CAPTAIN KILLICK ON SHORE.

MRS. SMYTHE passed out into Parliament-street quite quietly, and took her way homewards towards Half-Moon Street, Piccadilly. She found that she had a great tendency to loiter and look into shops, and she crossed the street to look into a map shop, but none of the maps there gave any comfort at all; there was none of the Gulf of St. Juan. She went in to get one.

She may be considered to be taking things very coolly —in fact, she was. She no more would believe that her husband and her son were drowned than she would believe that they were elected members of Parliament. The telegram from Lisbon, supplemented as it was by others at the Admiralty, seemed to her totally unsatisfactory. She felt absolutely sure that her husband and son were alive; consequently she was perfectly calm.

She advanced towards the counter. A gentleman was being served who had his back towards her. He was not very tall, but judging from his thin flanks and broad shoulders, was an athletic man. He was a very determined man, for he had his hands on his hips, and the brown thumbs of them, turned towards Mrs. Smythe, were pressed home in a very resolute way. He was also an irate man, for he said :

" Fiddle-de-dee, don't talk to me ; Noresby puts down the variation at 57° 26′, you have made it 58°. Do you know that with your abominable carelessness you might sacrifice the lives of five hundred sailors a year? it is simple manslaughter. But I am not accustomed to talk to clerks. Let me see the head of the house."

Mrs. Smythe knew the voice, and sat down in a corner. She recognized the voice of one of the bravest but not the least peppery captain in the service, Captain Killick. " I will wait here and speak to him," she thought. " Anything is better than going home to the girls without a ray of hope."

Captain Killick walked about the shop, fuming, and not noticing Mrs. Smythe until the head of the house

was fetched; they had a few minutes' interview together over the counter. At first, Captain Killick rode the high horse, but the head of the firm having proved to him that he was right, Captain Killick apologised very frankly and generously, and they were friends again.

"What do you think about the loss of the *Warhawk?*" said the head of the firm.

"Well, she is gone, and Smythe is probably over the mountains with the main part of his ship's company towards Valparaiso."

"You do not think they are drowned then?"

"Drowned! I should think not," said Captain Killick, with contempt. "The very last man to make such a fool of himself."

"Was there not something very queer about his family?" said the hydrographer.

"No," said Captain Killick.

"Well, you are more likely to be right than I am, but I thought there had been suspected murder, or something of that kind, in the family."

"Then I can tell you, as a gentleman and an officer, that you are utterly wrong; there is not a shadow of a

shade of suspicion about any member of Captain Smythe's family."

How easy it is to speak the truth and almost *lie* at one and the same time! Captain Killick was doing that, though he would not have liked to be told so. He turned round and was suddenly confronted with Mrs. Smythe. He was not in the least degree abashed, though he knew that she must have heard every word he had spoken.

Killick was a very handsome fellow to look at; as brown as a berry in complexion, with a clear, sharp, brilliant eye, aged about thirty-three, looking five-and-twenty; beautifully dressed in the height of fashion, but with a habit of keeping his legs apart and balancing himself from the hips, which betrayed the sailor, in spite of all the West-end tailor's art. On his brown, ungloved hands, were three or four very splendid rings, and on his watch-chain he wore a diamond ornament of great value. With these exceptions, his dress was in perfect taste.

"Mrs. Smythe, my very dear madam, I suppose that you have been to the Admiralty? Did you *ever* see such a set of noodles?"

"That is always your way with the executive, Captain Killick," said Mrs. Smythe, with a mournful smile. "But we are old friends."

"I should think we were. Your husband made a man of me; without him I should have been a mere extravagant dandy. What am I, according to Lord ——, in the House of Lords? one of the most promising of our scientific officers, and they said 'Hear, hear;' they had better hear or I will make them. Now come, and let me take you home."

Mrs. Smythe put her arm in his, and they went.

"My poor husband and my poor boy used to say that you always kept the ship's company in good humour though you were rather hot. Your manner gives me immense comfort now; you would not talk like this if you thought that your old friend and commander was drowned."

"Drowned!" said Captain Killick; "no more than you are. Talking about keeping the ship's company in good humour, I did not do that at the Admiralty this morning."

"Then you have been there?"

"I should rather think I *had;* I saw old Romans; he and I like one another as well as a mouse does a cat, and he said to me, 'We are going to send the *Danais.*' 'Why, Lord bless and save the man!' I said, 'what is the use of that? She will be six months getting there, if she gets there at all. Why,' I said, 'it's notorious that when the purser goes into the hold, he has to keep on the dunnage and timbers to avoid putting his foot through the bottom.' He said that it was not true, and we had a quarrel, and I came away after expressing a certain intention of my own."

"But, Captain Killick, you should not have said such a thing as that: it is not entirely correct, you know; the *Danais* is an oldish ship, but she is perfectly sea-worthy."

"There was dry rot in her when Smythe had her, for he told me so," said Captain Killick, somewhat crestfallen after her rebuke. "Well, here we are at the door. You will have to break this ridiculous rumour to your daughters. Would it not be reassuring to them if I was present?"

"It would indeed? What a kind and thoughtful man you are, my own son could not do more for me."

"I *am*, professionally speaking, your son," said Captain Killick, "for it was your husband who made a man of me."

"And you tried to make one of Clare," she replied. "But oh——"

She was firm again in a moment and they went in.

CHAPTER IV.

CAPTAIN KILLICK GETS HIS COMMISSION.

MRS. SMYTHE and Captain Killick entered together, and passed up into the drawing-room. It was occupied by a single young lady, who merits a slight description. She was not very tall, or very short, or very fair, or very dark, or very handsome, or very ugly, but she was startlingly remarkable for all that. She had rather a sun-burnt complexion, and her hair was pulled off her forehead and looped in a knot behind. But what attracted the attention of all beholders was the expression on her face—that of immense tenderness and benevolence, combined with great strength of will. Some people who did not appreciate her declared that she was extremely ugly, and could be excessively rude. Certain men and women, however, not to mention all children and dogs, simply adored her.

She was sitting at a table writing, clothed in a tight-fitting blue dress, with a small white collar round her throat. She rose as her mother came in, not noticing Captain Killick, except with one glance of her splendid violet eyes.

"Mabel, my love, allow me to introduce Captain Killick, an old brother officer of your father's."

"There is no need for an introduction, mamma," she said; "we know one another."

"That is most extraordinary," said Mrs. Smythe; "you never mentioned it, my dear."

"I did not think it worth while," said Mabel, steadily. "I met him at Lady Sutherly's at Southampton, and saw him often."

"I have brought your mother home from the Admiralty, Miss Smythe; she thought that you would be reassured by my presence. I had better tell you at once that the *War-hawk* is lost."

"And my father?" she asked.

"There is no intelligence from him. A boat's crew has reached Buenos Ayres with a report of the wreck, and they only report that they left him there. There

have been some ridiculous rumours at the Admiralty, which, when sifted, came to nothing. The Admiralty are going to send the *Danais*, far too slow a ship. I could get little satisfaction at the Admiralty this morning, so I am going to take my own course without bothering them or any one."

"And what course do you allude to, Captain Killick?" said Mrs. Smythe puzzled.

"Why, this, madam. My large steam yacht, the *Zenith*, has just completed her fittings for sea; her crew are shipped, and everything can be on board in two days. I was going for a scientific dredging expedition to Labrador, but I will unship all the gear, and in three days I will go out through the Needles to fetch my old captain back to Half-Moon Street. Those are my intentions, madam, and I can tell you that I will put my ship through the water two knots for the *Danais'* one, and she won't be ready for sea under a week."

"What have I done to deserve such generosity from you?" said Mrs. Smythe, bursting into tears.

"Madam, I have before told you that everything in life worth having, save my being and my wealth, I owe

to your husband; surely that is a sufficient reason. But now, madam, my time is short; I have one favour to ask, give me some token from yourself to your husband."

"Yes, surely, of what kind?"

"Why, if you could go upstairs and write him a few lines, the sight of them would gladden his heart far more than the sight of my brown face."

"I will do so gladly," she said, and she rose and left the room.

Captain Killick and Mabel were face to face alone. Mabel, with singular decision and emphasis, spoke first.

"Was it fair of you to resort to that subterfuge to get mamma out of the room, and to cause us to be left alone together?"

"Yes, I think so."

"H—m, I will say nothing. And so you are actually going to undertake this long, expensive, and dangerous voyage for my father's sake?"

"No, for the sake of your love."

"But I have given you one answer. Suppose I had not got my love to give you?"

"That makes not the least difference," said Captain Killick. "If you have given your love to another man, I will be his friend for your sake. Some things are beyond your power: you cannot help my loving you, and you cannot prevent my doing this for your love. I daresay that the other man is much nicer than I am, for, except professionally, I do not rank myself high. I am a very disagreeable person, though you might lead me with a thread."

"But, look here," said Mabel, "there is no other man; you are under an utter misconception. I do not care about anyone except my family—well, and you, if you will have it."

"Yet you refused me in a very emphatic manner."

"Yes, I was very angry. The insult which was put on me was too great to be borne. I could not bear it. Every day Lady Sutherly spoke of you and your admiration for me. She talked always of your immense wealth, of your high personal character and talents, and at last she said to me, in private, that a poor and ugly girl like myself had made a most splendid catch. The bitter humiliation of that moment will never be forgotten. I

asked her very quietly whether you had ever spoken to her on the subject. She replied that you were only waiting your own time. You came, and you got your answer."

"Look here, Mabel, let us set this thing right. I did speak to that false old woman about it. I asked her if she thought I had any chance, for I believed I had none. She said that I was safe, and that you had told her so."

"What a horrible and wicked woman!" said Mabel.

"Well, see. I am a gentleman, and cannot at this present moment, under the circumstances, ask you to reverse your decision; I will not even ask you, if I return home successful or unsuccessful, whether you will say 'yes' on the question instead of 'no.' I merely go to do you service for love, and if anyone else comes in my absence I will try to bear it, but I frankly tell you that I shall never love any other woman in the world."

She put up her two hands behind her back, and said, "I always liked you; now I love you."

What goes on in these cases is not accurately known. The fact is that few men do it more than once or twice in their lives, always in a different manner, and never

say anything about it afterwards. It is perfectly certain that Mabel and Captain Killick were sitting on the sofa side by side soon, and that she said to him:

"George, you must keep nothing from me now. Do you believe that my father is drowned?"

"My darling Mabel," he replied, "I do not. Am I a man likely to go on a fool's errand? Should I not be going on a fool's errand if I went after a drowned man? I tell you fairly, my dear, that I think he is in difficulty, and possibly in great danger; I shall not return unless I have either secured him or learnt his fate. I may be a very long time away. He is on the worst part of the coast, and he will possibly try to fight his way across the continent to Valparaiso. If I discover that he has done so, I shall follow him on land, and send the yacht round to Valparaiso."

"And Clare," she said,—"from what little I have heard about the matter, I am as anxious about Clare as I am about my father."

"Clare," said Captain Killick, "is not a boy to 'go under' very easily. I am more anxious about your father."

"But you are not anxious about *him*, are you?" said Mabel.

"Of course I am to some extent," said Killick.

"Our time is very short, tell me what men you will get to follow you?"

"In two days from to-morrow morning I shall get twenty additional men from the Naval Reserve, who are about Portsmouth and Southampton. I shall give them ten pounds a month, and twenty pounds a-piece if we succeed. I shall do it by money. Money will do everything except win the love of an honest woman, as I have won yours."

When Mrs. Smythe returned with her letter, she found Captain Killick sitting on the sofa with his hand in her daughter's. They were neither of them in the least degree disconcerted by her arrival, but smiled. She remarked, "Oh! indeed!"

Matters were explained to her fully, but she would say nothing save, "Exactly," or "Quite so," which was not quite satisfactory. She was making up a little speech, for she was utterly astonished, when the most frightful yells, stampings, and screams were heard overhead.

She had only time to say, "God bless you both," when she had to hurry out of the room, and see what new disaster had befallen her.

CHAPTER V.

CAPTAIN KILLICK GOES OUT THROUGH THE NEEDLES.

THE most thoughtless person must have remarked the extraordinary gaps which occur between the ages of the children of naval officers continually afloat, like Captain Smythe for example. Mabel was nineteen, her brother Clare, supposed by the Admiralty to be drowned, was sixteen, her sister Ethel was twelve, and her sister Matilda, who had just set the house on fire, was only eight.

Ethel was an exceedingly sensible girl, though with a few faults of character which will develop themselves; she was perfectly able to take care of her sister under ordinary circumstances, but she was so young that she liked play, and when nurse was out of the way would help her sister at many iniquities, which she as a cautious young lady repudiated afterwards: a line of conduct

which her younger sister would have considered mean in any one else, but which she thought to be natural genius on the part of her beloved Ethel.

Nurse had gone to her dinner, leaving Miss Tilly in charge of her sister Ethel. She might have heard the door locked behind her, if she had not been a little deaf. Locked it was, however.

"Now," said Ethel, "we are safe. What are you going to do?"

It soon appeared that Matilda had been reading Foxe's Book of Martyrs, and she wanted a new doll. It occurred to her that it would be good fun to burn the old one alive; Ethel thought that it would be a fine thing also, and entirely agreed. "How," she said, "are we to do it? it must have a *san benito*, and where can we get one?"

"We must make it of paper," said Matilda.

"But we have not got any," said Ethel. "Stay, there is nurse's note-paper."

"She would be so cross," said Matilda.

"Well, you go down and get some," said Matilda; "all is quiet."

Ethel turned the key and stole downstairs to her mother's dressing-room, to the very place where her mother had been writing her letter, which she was to give Captain Killick. She was almost too soon, for she saw her mother pass down the stairs with a letter in her hand. "She has been writing," said Ethel; "ten to one her escritoire is open."

It was, and covered with tumbled papers. Those she dared not touch, but the waste-paper basket stood upon the open escritoire; and that Ethel considered fair game. She took the top paper on it, a large blue one, and sped upstairs.

The large blue paper made a most excellent *san benito*, and there were plenty of matches. They put the doll in the fender, after a trial for heresy, and set fire to her, but she would not burn.

"More matches, more matches!" cried Ethel, now furiously enjoying the sport. "This wretch, this enemy to religion and to the peace of Europe, shall die. Mind, Matilda, I am Mary Tudor and you are the Pope's legate; you ought to say, 'Strike, and spare not, madam,' and then I ought to say—I forget what I ought

to say then; I'll remember it when this dog of a heretic is burning. More matches!"

She lit three at once, and the *san benito* caught fire in the most lovely manner, but the doll looked so exasperatingly calm and careless, that Matilda lit another match and put it to its nose; in doing this she burnt her fingers badly and lost her temper.

"Bother the brute!" she said, in violent anger; and taking up the whole flaming arrangement she sent it flying into the corner of the room, on to one of the white-curtained beds. A sheet of flame rose at once to the ceiling, and both girls stood aghast.

"Be quiet, Tilly," said Ethel, "I will put it out. Don't tell."

"*I* never do," said Tilly, "but don't you say it was *me*."

"No, I won't," she said, trying to throw water on it from the jug. "We must call for help."

And that they did with a will, bringing their mother into the room pale and breathless; she gave only one glance, and then cried out, "Killick! Killick! fire! fire!"

He was at her side in an instant, and Mabel was behind him.

"Stand back!" he cried, as he seized the burning muslin in his hands, "and take the children away." He then threw the burning curtain on the bed, and turning the mattress over on them held them down. "Mabel," he said quietly, "saturate these things with water."

She seized the bath-can and poured. "Mind my left hand, darling," he said; "don't wet *that*." She looked at it. It was all scorched and blistered; but the fire was put out before the servants had arrived, and the two dear naughty ones were brought down to the drawing-room.

The first thing was Captain Killick's hand, which was badly burnt, so badly that Mrs. Smythe, a most experienced lady, sent next door but one for a surgeon. He did the hand up and said—

"I must see you once a day for the next fortnight, my good sir."

"That is impossible," said Captain Killick. "I go to sea in two days."

"You can't possibly do that," said the surgeon. "You must stay on shore for a fortnight."

"You think that it would be better that he should delay," said Mrs. Smythe.

"Certainly he should do so," said the surgeon.

Mabel knew the struggle which was going on in his mind, for the counterpart of it was going on in hers. She would have given anything to have had him for another fortnight; but then—her father. He would have given a year from his life to stay by her a little longer; but then he had bound himself to fly, as it were, on the wings of the wind after the missing man. He made his decision without vexing her by an appeal even with his eyes, and so cemented their love for ever.

"It is absolutely necessary that I must be out through the Needles the day after to-morrow, and so the less we talk about it, the less argument there will be."

"A wilful man must have his way," said the doctor. "Have you a surgeon on board?"

"Yes, an admirable one."

"Well, then, I wash my hands of it," said the doctor. "It will be a considerable time before you will be able to wash *yours!*"

This made them laugh. The doctor departed, and the two culprits were brought up for judgment before a mother who never scolded, only rebuked.

"My dears, what were you doing?"

"Well, see here," said Ethel, "I have let Tilly bear the blame too often, and I am not going to have her blamed now. The fact is, that we were burning Tilly's doll for a heretic. We have hung her four times and she would not repent, and so at last we handed her over to the secular arm. Even then she would not burn without setting the house on fire. She was a regular beast, and I am glad she is burnt."

"What were her faults?" said Captain Killick.

"Well, she would never go to sleep at nights since we broke the thing in her back which made her eyes shut (I say *we*, but I am afraid that I did *that*) to find out how it was done."

"You nurse dolls still, then?" said Captain Killick.

"I sometimes have a turn with Tilly's," said Ethel, blushing; "but she is dead, and there is an end of the matter."

"And high time too," said Mrs. Smythe, "with the house on fire in the middle of the day. Mind, I'll have no more *autos-da-fés*, though I am insured over my value, I believe."

Alas, it would have been better for Mrs. Smythe if the children had burnt the house down, and she had got the money for the insurance, than that they should have burnt that doll with that particular *san benito*.

Three days afterwards, the lighthouse-keeper at the Needles was preparing to light up, and he remarked that the sun was setting wild in the west. All the mail ships had passed out, and no yacht was likely to go to westward with such a sunset and a dropping barometer. Yet here came a largish steamer—black, with a gold beading, barque-rigged—going full speed, with top-gallant masts sent down. The man who was in charge of her evidently knew her way, though, from his dress, he was not a pilot. He stood on the bridge, and brought his ship through Fiddler's Races and round the Shingles

in gallant style; then she sped through the growing darkness westward, as steady on her course as a star.

The man noticed by the lighthouse-keeper standing on the bridge of the steamer, was Captain Killick. He was reading a letter which he had received at Southampton. It ran thus:—

"I have the book you sent me, and guessing where you are, I will study to find out from it at what time the sun rises there. When it is morning with you it may be midnight with me; but always at *your* sunrise remember you will know that I am praying for you, and mingle your prayers with mine."

CHAPTER VI.

JAMES PRITCHARD.

DID the reader notice that the hydrographer, in whose shop Mrs. Smythe met Captain Killick, said that there was some suspicion about Captain Smythe's family? The Captain in repudiating it told the exact truth, and yet a most perfect falsehood. That is a thing which has been done more than once in the world. While Captain Killick is at sea we must take you into our entire confidence about this matter, and we think that you will not find that matter entirely uninteresting. Captain Killick said that there was no suspicion about any of Captain Smythe's family: that was true. There was, however, a very serious suspicion about a member of *his wife's* family.

A sailor's orphan used, at one time, to sit upon the shore in Devonshire, and watch the ships go by. He

took great interest in the ships, because his kind uncle with the brown face told him that he was to be a sailor himself some day.

To be a sailor, to command one of those ships which passed by was the dream of the boy's youth. At length he went to sea, but only in the merchant service, for his uncle was not rich. In fact, Captain Smythe was poor, but just married. He did his duty by the boy in placing him as well as he could; but he never concealed from himself the fact that his wife's brother's son would never make a sailor as her father had been. He would not trust him in the navy: both Captain Smythe's name and the boy's late father's name was too well known in naval circles to risk a *fiasco*. And the boy was a lazy, dreamy fellow, who would go to sea on romantic grounds, but had really better on the whole have stayed on shore.

He was hopelessly careless with his money. He turned out not a very bad sailor, but even the relaxed discipline of an easy-going merchantman was too much for him. That might have been got over, but his irregularities about money were found at last impossible to arrange. He lent money to messmates which was

not properly his. Captain Smythe, to whom such a proceeding was terrible, repaid it in fear and trembling. At last something happened to this youth. James Pritchard got into a difficulty which put him utterly out of Captain Smythe's hands.

James Pritchard, then first mate of the *Gauntlet*, was brought up at Bow-street for passing eighteen false sovereigns.

The real story about this disaster of his is one which it is extremely easy to tell, but extremely difficult to moralize over; perhaps we had better not express any opinion one way or another.

He had contracted a great intimacy at a certain house in Sydney, with a young man a little older than himself, an intimacy which lasted several voyages, and at length the young man came home with him; it having been settled that Pritchard was to marry his sister after the next trip. Pritchard required a cheque changed for eighteen pounds; *her* brother did it for him in London with eighteen bad sovereigns; poor Pritchard was arraigned, and pleaded not guilty. Had he told the truth, the detectives would have informed him that his

friend's father was one of the most notorious coiners in the world. He would not tell upon the brother of the only woman he ever had loved in his life; he held his tongue, and was transported for seven years. He thought to himself, Would she wait all that time for him if she knew that he had saved her brother? He could not let her know because every letter was read by the authorities of the prison. Her brother, however, managed the matter for him; he wrote home to say how cleverly he had "done" James Pritchard. She laughed, and immediately afterwards married a very prosperous young farmer. She then gave information against her father and her brother, and so quarrelled with her family, who never afterwards spoke to her, probably because they were all relegated to penal servitude for life, and had no opportunity of doing so.

James Pritchard, however, was transported for seven years to West Australia, and his name was never mentioned by *his* family, who believed him guilty, in consequence of his previous carelessness in money matters. James Pritchard was Mrs. Smythe's nephew, and Captain Killick knew the fact.

Although one of the most careless fellows in the world he was not by any means a bad one. The position which he took with jailor, chaplain, captain, warder, governor, and everyone else was that he was an absolutely innocent person. He never let out his secret, but he calmly asserted his innocence, and, curiously enough, everybody believed him.

One thing had got into his mind which never got out again. He allowed that he had had a fair trial, and was condemned by his own default, but he argued that he had a perfect right to escape if he could, *without shedding blood.* That he could not do, as he always said afterwards. He would have surrendered at any moment to anyone in authority; he escaped without any temptation for blood-shedding.

He spent two years, not very unhappily, in West Australia. A very good gentleman, pretty well known now, was governor there, at that time, and he took a great fancy to the young sailor, whom he believed to be innocent. James Pritchard would have served his time had not Lord Marcus D'Este gone on his travels and visited West Australia.

CHAPTER VII.

LORD MARCUS D'ESTE GOES ON HIS TRAVELS.

THAT ingenious young nobleman was received there as a godsend. He was good-looking enough, well grown, and intelligent if not intellectual. He did not know very much, having been educated at a certain public school, consequently his appetite for common facts was enormous. He was a perpetual note of interrogation, and bid fair, had he lived until seventy, to know more than the late Lord Brougham.

Among other things he had taken to botany, and as West Australia is the flower land of that island he was completely in clover. He rambled about with a great tin case and gathered everything, from the bottle bush which groweth on a tree, to the Kennedyæ which groweth on the ground. In plucking a wreath of the latter he

was bitten by a snake, species to him unknown; he slashed his hand with his penknife, after killing the snake, and, putting the dead reptile into his box, continued his journey. Arriving at a station he tumbled out the snake among his flowers in the verandah. The bystanders were horrified. "If that snake had bitten you," said one of them, "you would have been dead in ten minutes."

"He bit me two hours ago," said Lord Marcus, "and I am none the worse. When I had cut my hand and sucked the blood, I at once anatomised his head; there are no poison fangs."

Since the adventure of St. Paul at Melita, they thought this the greatest miracle ever seen; they looked that he should have dropped down dead. But then they argued "He is only an Irishman after all, lord as he is, so perhaps it won't hurt him;" and they continue to kill that kind of snake to this day.

Although he was "only an Irishman" they loved him, as the English and Scotch will when the Irish will let them, and he was free to go anywhere. One day he was above the town of Perth, pushing through a

Grevillia scrub, which grew close down to the green sea-water, when he heard voices, and pausing, listened to the conversation.

Before him lay a sailor, apparently a man of-war's man, with his bare feet almost in the water. Beside the sailor lay three children, two boys and a girl, who had been gathering flowers, and were tying them up in nose-gays. It seemed that the sailor had been telling them a story, for the girl, who had her feet in the quiet almost motionless sea, which now at full tide flooded the roots of the lea scrub, said,

"You can't leave off there, you know. It is not satisfactory."

"Well," said the sailor, putting his hands at the back of his head, amidst the grass; "she did not do anything of the sort."

"I should have done it," said the girl.

"Ah, but she didn't, don't you see?" said the sailor. "The first thing in the morning she gets up, dresses herself, goes into Maidenhead, and buys the chest of drawers. But she never knew anything about the five-pound note until years after, when she sold the

chest of drawers to a Jew, and then she would not have known it, only that it was a bad one, and he was prosecuted for passing forged paper."

"That, evidently," said Lord Marcus, discovering himself, "is the conclusion of a very interesting story. I should like to hear the beginning."

The sailor stood up quickly. The children exclaimed "It is the mad Irish lord that the snakes can't harm!" But the sailor said—

"I was only telling a foolish story to these children, my lord. I have forgotten the beginning."

"I am sorry for that; the end was very good. What ship do you belong to?"

At this point the children had departed with their flowers, and they were alone.

"I am the harbour-master's coxswain," said the sailor.

"I am collecting information of all kinds," said Lord Marcus. "Now what may they say to you, for instance? Don't think that I wish to be impertinent, but I consider it necessary to collect information of all kinds."

"By good conduct I may get a year off my sentence."

"A convict?"

"Yes."

"Well, you don't look like it. Sit down here by me, and if you don't mind, you know, tell me what you did."

"Nothing."

"Ah, well," said the gentle Irishman, "juries are queer sometimes. There was my own agent, Paul Rafferty, and Dennis O'Callagan fired into the back of him with a nail full of blunderbusses—I should say a blunderbuss full of nails—and the doctor was twelve hours on horseback getting them out of him; and one of them was identified as a nail out of the coffin which O'Callagan drew on the letter he sent to Paul. But we couldn't get a verdict for all that; the jury found that O'Callagan was just keeping the birds off the potatoes with his blunderbuss. You are the man I want if your name is James Pritchard."

"That is my name," said James, looking at him.

Lord Marcus had the faculty, not unknown among his countrymen, of talking great nonsense until he had

eased his mind, and then speaking as shrewd common sense as any Scotchman.

"I have heard of you; you have earned a very good character. You were on the West Coast Expedition last year, under Captain Townsend."

"I was, my lord."

"I understand that you were selected, not only for your good character, but because you had known the coast before?"

"I had been twice off it in previous voyages, and I was able in one part of the voyage to act as pilot."

"Do you know Pelsart's Islands?" asked Lord Marcus.

Had he been looking in the face of the man he was talking to instead of arranging his flowers, he would have seen a very strange expression there as James Pritchard answered "Yes."

"Can you take my yacht there?"

"Yes, if I can get leave."

"That is easily managed, I dare say. Have you ever read the story of Pelsart's shipwreck?"

"Yes, I read it years ago at sea, and I have seen another account of it since. I know it well."

"I want, now I am here," said Lord Marcus, "to go and see the spot from curiosity. It always struck me as being the most wonderful and romantic of shipwrecks; I should like to see the place where it happened."

"There is not so much to see there, my lord," said James Pritchard.

"Still, I have a great curiosity to see the place," said Lord Marcus. "In the history of the world no such mad horrors were committed as were done there. I am determined to go to the spot. I will pay you well as pilot."

"Might you not get a better man than myself," said James Pritchard, "and take me in a subordinate capacity?"

"I might," said Lord Marcus, "but I like the look of you."

"Well then, my lord, the thing for good or evil, is done. I hope that you will try to think the best of me in future. You are coming back?"

"Here to Perth?" said Lord Marcus, looking up from his flowers. "Of course I am; I could not go

any other way with you on board, you see. I should be put in jail, or something of that kind, for assisting at the escape of a convict."

"Exactly. You understand that?"

"Most perfectly," said Lord Marcus laughing. "If you attempt to escape I will put you in irons and feed you on" (here he mentioned two modern forms of preserved victuals—food which we decline to name) "lest the outraged laws of our country should be vindicated in my person. But you would not do that, you know, for you would compromise *me* after having trusted *you*. Well, to pleasanter matters. I will trust you, and you shall take me to Pelsart's Islands. There is a great deal which is very curious to be found out there. I am going to write about the matter, and I wish to have been on the spot."

"There are some very strange things about Pelsart's Islands, my lord," said James Pritchard. "Stranger than any romance which I ever read. But before I go as your pilot I must extort a promise from you, convict as I am."

"And what is that?"

"That you will not in any case take me northward, but land me on the coast of West Australia."

"But I am coming back here."

"My lord, you might be driven north, and find no land before Java. I desire that you will land me in the colony."

"That is a strange request," said Lord Marcus, laughing. "I might land you at Java and you would be free."

"Yes, but totally unable to rehabilitate myself, or clear my character. If you land me anywhere but in the colony, I shall, under certain circumstances, return."

"Well, I would be hanged if I would," said Lord Marcus.

"I wish to avoid any misconception. You would be liable to prosecution for assisting a convict to escape."

Lord Marcus did not seem to think this such a very terrible affair after all; in fact he treated the matter with the most reprehensible levity.

"Well, if you are fool enough to come back I can't help you; but I tell you once more that I am coming back here. I leave the doctor behind me arranging my collections. He is your hostage."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SECRET OF PELSART'S ISLANDS.

SILENTLY the yacht slid out of the harbour between the flowery heath-clad headlands, and merrily she began to play with the ocean waves outside. Lord Marcus was enjoying himself thoroughly, walking up and down the deck of his beautiful craft, a 250-ton schooner, built by White, of Cowes, and talking to his sailing-master. Having agreed with him that they should have a pleasant autumn cruise, he went to the binnacle and began talking to his pilot.

A beautiful cold southerly wind had set in, and the yacht was spinning before it rapidly over the great Pacific rollers. The sky was blue, the sea was purple: innumerable white-winged sea-birds were all around them, shooting through the air or swimming idly on the water; the whale-birds, most beautiful of terns, were

about them everywhere, while away to the west was a school of those monarchs of the sea, the sperm-whales themselves, taking their pleasure in the great waters; following them steadily was one great shark, with his attendant pilot-fish. It was a day when the whole sea was rejoicing, and the schooner and its owner rejoiced with them.

"Well, pilot," said Lord Marcus, "you do not seem cheerful; forget the past for to-day at least. Come, serve me well on this voyage, and confusion is in it if I can't better your position. Make a new start in life, and I will be your friend in the old country."

"You are very kind," said James Pritchard, "you will try to believe the best of me when I am dead."

"You are not going to die yet, man."

"I don't know, my lord," he said, with some confusion in his manner.

Lord Marcus looked a little puzzled, but said—

"We shall have a fine voyage I fancy."

"There will be no great wind to speak of," said Pritchard, "but this is the 18th of March, and the rains generally come on at that time."

Still the weather continued fine and the wind fair, till on the sixth day the schooner was becalmed to the south of the four islands which make up the group on which Pelsart was shipwrecked in 1610, and on which islands such terrible events took place, events unparalleled in the history of shipwrecks.

"Now which do you make out to be the island which the mutineers held?" said Lord Marcus to his pilot.

"This one nearest to us, *most undoubtedly*," said Pritchard, with rather singular emphasis.

"And the loyal people on that island to the westward I suppose?"

"Exactly, my lord."

"What a wonderfully quiet and beautiful place for the transaction of such horrors! Well, the devil is everywhere, but God is his master, that is a comfort."

After a little time he said, "I suppose that I shall anchor, and we will go on shore and put up the tent; there is water I think."

"No; do not you remember the story?"

"Of course. I say, don't those clothes of mine fit you?"

James was dressed in a sailor's shirt and trowsers belonging to the stores of the yacht. It had been his own request, and so he now appeared with the words, "*Diomede*, R. Y. S.," in yellow letters across his breast and on the blue ribbon of his Panama hat. For some reason he seemed uneasy in them, and fidgetted with his body rather.

"A little tight round the waist, my lord, that is all," said James.

"You must have been making flesh since you came on board, I suppose, for they were a good fit then; you chose them yourself."

They anchored snugly, and the cutter went on shore with the tent. Before it was properly pitched Lord Marcus had discovered three shells, which were, he averred, new to science. I regret to say, because I hate recording the disappointment of a good fellow, that they were all as old as the hills; but Lord Marcus got a surprise before he left the island which made him forget all about those shells and all others.

There were some pleasant days there. The little ship's company were nearly all on shore, and as he could

never keep anything to himself, it was perfectly well known that he was writing a poem on the subject of Pelsart's shipwreck, and was studying the localities. Still, he kept to the beach very much, and collected strange creatures, which, in their native element expanded, were as beautiful as most flowers, but which in his spirit bottles were ugly bladders.

On the second day he took a boat out to the supposed situation of the old wreck. It is doubtful if that mass of seaweed and coral which they saw below them in the shallow sea, was the wreck or not. He determined to go another day. He gave orders for every man on shore to turn in at nine, and he walked about himself.

Some of the men lay in the tent and some lay outside on the sand. The man who lay outside of the rest was James Pritchard. "It seems a shame," said Lord Marcus, "those fellows will put him away from them because he is a convict. He is as good as half of them."

It did not occur to Lord Marcus that James Pritchard lay on the sand outside the others for his own purpose. Lord Marcus after a time rolled himself in a blanket,

and slept such a sleep as can only be slept under the winking southern cross.

They had been cutting some brushwood that day near the shore, and Lord Marcus had taken their axe from them, on the plea that he should want it in the morning; he would have been puzzled to say for what, but he had a theory for everything. When he went to sleep the axe was beside him, when he awoke the axe was beside him in exactly the same position. He noticed a difference in the axe, and the armourer did the same.

A very dangerous thing had to be done, and James Pritchard did it. He wanted that axe, and Lord Marcus had nearly spoilt everything by getting possession of it. When, however, everyone was fast asleep, no watch being kept, James Pritchard rose, and stepping to the side of Lord Marcus, removed the axe.

James Pritchard was very difficult to awake the next morning. He was very sleepy. Lord Marcus was singularly wakeful, having had a good night in the sand. The axe was beside him. He sat up, looked at it, stared, and believed that he must be going out of his mind. He sent for the armourer.

"I can't understand this," he said; "the axe was perfectly right last night; look at the blade now."

It was smashed, and jagged till it was worthless. The armourer could give no clue to the matter, except that his lordship had had the nightmare. This was by no means satisfactory.

"All I can say is," said the armourer, "that this axe has been against stone or iron. I can't say no further than that."

It was a great puzzle to Lord Marcus, but he got a greater one soon.

The weather broke up; they had a thunderstorm from the east, which showed them more fireworks than they had ever seen at the Crystal Palace, and which made nearly as much noise as the battle of Sedan. Lord Marcus in disgust went on board his yacht, and took the whole ship's company with him; the ship was more pleasant than the shore: the south wind was now so persistent that he doubted if he could get back to Perth in three weeks. He moored his ship in the lee of one of the smaller islands, and made every one comfortable.

Lord Marcus was not a good sailor. His idea was that when the men had nothing to do they should lie in bed. At this time, it so fell about that his sailing-master was ill of Mediterranean fever, and was forced to keep his berth. Lord Marcus at once assumed full command of the ship, and allowed every one to do exactly as they chose. Every sailor came out in his true colours, now that discipline was relaxed, and Lord Marcus made the wonderful discovery that the immortal British sailor is really very little better than any one else when the tarnish of discipline is rubbed off him.

His ideas received a rude shock when he took command of his own ship. He resorted to physical violence, and, being the strongest man in the ship, succeeded to a certain extent. James Pritchard, who although a good sailor, was a convict, could not assist him, save by advice. James Pritchard told him to hold his own, and, as soon as he got a north wind, get back to Perth. Lord Marcus was in his berth when he said this, and James departed, recommending Lord Marcus to lock his cabin door. Lord Marcus did so, after going out on deck in his shirt and trousers to see that everything was

right. He discovered that everything was wrong—there was no watch set; and, when he went to his sailing-master's cabin, he found that no one had been attending to him. He took care of him with that gentle patience which so highly ennobles the Irish, and then he turned in, locking his cabin door behind him with a heavy heart. The men whom he had trusted so well had got at the liquor, and were now a mere set of brutes.

He awoke early in the morning, and on his table lay a letter and a round match-box, such as were used in the colonies in those days. What could this mean? He stood half-dressed and read the letter; it could only come from one person, because the last man in his cabin had been James Pritchard. It ran thus:—

"My Lord,—I have robbed you, but I have paid for the robbery. This may or may not be moral.

"Had I considered that your crew were dangerously mutinous I should not have deserted you. They are perfectly manageable. They have got hold of some drink; it is nearly exhausted, and then they will be good boys again.

"Try to forget me. I am drowned in trying to escape. There are mysteries in this wondrous land of Australia which the scientific world knows nothing of. I am about to solve one.

"I pray of you to make no hue and cry after me. If the rains continue I am saved; if they fail I am lost. But in future, in Europe, if you meet me, never recognize me. I trust to your good-nature for that.

"I have hoodwinked you from the first moment when you asked me to pilot you here. I have succeeded in my object now, but only partially. Open the match-box which lies by this letter, and you will discover the secret of Pelsart's Island.

"I would not, if I were in your place, attempt to discover it for myself. It was by mere accident that I discovered it. Let the mystery remain as such.

"JAMES PRITCHARD."

Lord Marcus was extremely astonished, but it occurred to him to open the match-box. There was not much in it, only apparently a little piece of paper rolled up very

small. He shut the match-box up again, put it under his pillow, took off his clothes, and getting into his bunk slept the sleep of the just.

CHAPTER IX.

LORD MARCUS FINDS REASONS FOR NOT PURSUING PRITCHARD.

THE crew, having exhausted their liquor, returned to their allegiance and their work, looking as foolish as penitent and crapulous sailors can. It was discovered, however, that the convict pilot, James Pritchard, had, during the relaxation of discipline, gone off in a boat by himself. Lord Marcus was of course very angry at losing his boat, but otherwise he seemed to take the matter rather coolly. His idea was probably that it was no use crying over spilt milk; he was rather loud about his boat certainly, but he kept certain other facts entirely in his own bosom. His single-barrelled fowling-piece was gone, with a canister of powder, a shot belt, a box of wads and another of percussion caps; likewise there were five-and-twenty sovereigns missing,

and his lordship's best pilot coat. But he never said anything except to himself, and then only, "That was an honest lad and a good fellow. It is very few who would have been so honest, God speed him!"

And you will see some day that Lord Marcus was right in what he said. When he got back to Perth he possibly distorted matters, but there had been a small crumpled paper in the match-box, with very little writing on it, which told him more about James Pritchard's designs than the letter, that he most carefully burnt.

Still he took to walking about Pelsart's Island in every direction by himself. Shells had no attraction for him now; he had made out that there were three species of land-crabs on the rocks in the centre of the island. There were nothing of the kind, but he declared that, from claws which he found lying about in the sand, there were two other species than the common one; he did no more towards discovering them than he did towards discovering the lost tribes of Israel, or indeed anything else. The mystery of Pelsart's Island was not for him. He, however, read a learned paper

about these crabs before the Naturalists' Society at Perth, and received a vote of thanks. The crabs did not exist, but he had got to believe in them.

When the wind got fair and the crew in good order he sailed back to Perth. His sailing-master was for looking after the boat which the fugitive had taken, and made sure that he could be tracked; that being an isolated colony, he urged, the man could only make for the settlements. But Lord Marcus, with the secret of the match-box in his own bosom, knew otherwise, and most peremptorily ordered that the subject should not be renewed. "I am no thief-taker," he said, angrily; "a hunted beast is safe from me." And he walked up and down the deck in a mood not to be disturbed.

What was he thinking of? Of the story which his grandmother had often told him, a story of 1798.

She, Lady Dunorrin, had been married a little more than a year when the troubles of that terrible time came on. She happened to be at home alone one night, while her young husband was scouring the country after a

dispersed band of rebels. She was walking up and down with her baby in her arms, when the window which looked upon the lake was opened and a young man, roughly dressed, torn and bleeding, limped into the room.

She knew him before he spoke. "Lady Dunorrin," he said, "I and mine have been on the estate for a century. I am hotly hunted. In God's name save me, for the sake of my wife and child!"

She never hesitated for a moment. Holding her baby, our Lord Marcus's father, on her arm, she opened a door and said hurriedly:

"The castle is half empty; you can find plenty of hiding-places up there, but I would not leave the place until the coast is clear.'

"The heavens be your bed!" he said hurriedly. "But my lord and the soldiers are only a mile behind me."

"I will take care of you, Mike," she said, "for old times' sake."

He tried to thank her, but could not. He passed into the darkness and was gone.

In twenty minutes she heard her husband ride up hurriedly, and then he came into the room. "Mary," he said, "we are disappointed again. We have tracked that scoundrel Mike Whelan nearly to the edge of the park, and we have missed him."

"George," she said, "I am terrified. Let me sit on this chair with baby, and we will talk so."

"Terrified, my darling!" said Lord Dunorrin. "There is no need for that. We have cleared them out of the county of Westmeath, and Mike Whelan is the last of them. Don't be frightened."

"I am not frightened about the Whiteboys, poor deluded fellows! I am afraid of your anger."

"Was I ever angry with you?"

"Never, and it is that which makes me dread your anger. George, don't be angry with me. Mike Whelan came into that window twenty minutes ago, and I have hid him."

Lord Dunorrin came of a very hot-tempered family, and she was afraid that he would quarrel with her. She, as an Englishwoman, did not know the Irish. She was afraid that he would be very angry with her; but

the Irish were very much hunted at one time, and so were the Scotch, so were the English.

Lord Dunorrin's ancestors had been hunted exactly like this poor Mike Whelan, so instead of scolding his wife,

> "He laughed a laugh of merry scorn.
> "He came and kissed her where she stood."

And he said, "Where is the boy?"

And she replied, "I don't know."

"We will get him out, darling," he replied.

That night the castle was filled with dragoons. The captian was uneasy in his mind unless he had leave to search the house. Lord Dunorrin would not have that done. Furious loyalist as he was, he would not have the sanctity of his house violated by English soldiers.

In the middle of the night Mike Whelan had lain down in a garret. He had sucked his wounds and bound them in his stockings. He had fallen to sleep, and was beginning to dream of a world in which there were no politics, when he was awakened by a light in his eyes.

The terrible Lord Dunorrin, his pursuer and his

deadly enemy, stood before him, the man who had taken the English side, and had sworn that no rebel should live in Ireland—yet an Irishman himself.

Mike Whelan rose as well as he could and said, "My lord, I surrender."

"Hold your tongue," said Lord Dunorrin. "Remember, for the soul of you, that I don't know your name. The house is full of soldiers. I only can prevent them coming here. You must be perfectly quiet. You are George Moriarty, are you not?"

"Yes."

"Well, you must get out of this, and we will get ye out of it. Don't do it again."

"I will not, my lord, but we have been very hard pressed," said Mike Whelan.

"You have been very hard pressed," said Lord Dunorrin, "but you have gone the wrong way to work."

"May be so, my lord, but save me."

"Swear to me that you will not go on in this Whiteboy conspiracy."

"I will swear it, my lord."

Lord Dunorrin's claret and whisky were alike good, and Captain Gordon, a most temperate man and a good officer, only remembered, the next morning, that he ought to search Lord Dunorrin's house. He mentioned the fact to him.

"I suppose that you will let me go over the house, Lord Dunorrin?"

"If you offer to do it, I will blow your brains out," was Lord Dunorrin's rather rash reply.

Captain Gordon's grandpapa happened to have been hung, drawn, and quartered, at Carlisle, in 1746, after Culloden. Reflecting that there had not happened to be a Lord Dunorrin in those parts at that time, Captain Gordon grew pensive, and then said—

"I suppose that you ought to give me your word of honour that there is not a Whiteboy in the house."

"I give it most freely," said Lord Dunorrin.

"Well," said Captain Gordon, "you Irish can,—at times; but I take your lordship's word."

And they all went away, and Mike Whelan bettered himself generally, and Lord Dunorrin had not told any-

thing which was false. Mike Whelan had forsworn the Whiteboys before he spoke.

That was old Lady Dunorrin's story; and the effect of it on Lord Marcus was, that he would never push a hunted man. Consequently, he never allowed any pursuit of James Pritchard.

CHAPTER X.

PRITCHARD'S ESCAPE.

JAMES PRITCHARD'S attempt was one of the most remarkable ever made. It was *one* of the most remarkable, we most advisedly say, because it was not so splendid as Governor Eyre's solitary march of 700 miles round the Great Bight.

The furthest point of civilization to the north, at that time, was at the mouth of the Murchison river; there was only a hut there inhabited by a stockman and a hut-keeper, the latter of whom had rather a weary life of it, and was glad to see any new face—a gratification which he seldom enjoyed.

One day, when looking out at the driving rain, a young man, a sailor, with a gun in his hand, stood before him, and he said, "Where the dickens have you dropped from? Come in, mate; these rains are enough

to float Noah's ark." And James Pritchard came in, and, opening his peacoat, showed his sailor's shirt, with his ship's name upon it.

"I have been out at sea for two days," he said.

"Are you wet, man?" said the hutkeeper.

"Ask a fellow that, with these rains?" said James Pritchard.

"Well," said the hutkeeper, bestirring himself, to make the fire burn, "I needn't have asked that. Is there a ship cast away, or have you run?"

"Run."

A sacred person now was James Pritchard. The poor ex-convict hutkeeper had the same instinct about hunted people which was shared by my Lord Marcus D'Este and his grandmother, Lady Dunorrin. One touch of nature makes the whole world kin. I do not say that this instinct of shielding hunted things is peculiarly moral; but people do it. The late Dr. Johnson was a moral man, and enthusiastically admired the conduct of Mrs. Flora Macdonald in shielding the Pretender. I will say no more.

"Now, where are you going, mate?" said the hut-

keeper; "we can keep you here, or if the troopers come round we can put you in the bush. Besides, none of them would bother you if they did come. We are thorough good friends with the troopers."

"I will rest and dry myself before I answer you," said James Pritchard. "Who is your stockman?"

"Well," said the hut-keeper, "as we are all in the same boat, I may tell you that I am seven-pence and he is one shilling and two pence." *

"Fourteenpence," said James Pritchard, "that is a long chalk up."

"It is," said the hut-keeper.

James Pritchard looked at him for the first time very closely. He was a good-looking young man, but appeared to want vitality; James Pritchard seemed to feel that he could trust him in spite of the "sevenpence," but he thought it far wiser not to say that he had got sevenpenny-worth himself.

"I want to confide in you," said James Pritchard. "I am not a blameless person myself. I want to ask you this—is your stockman likely to round?"

* A convict's way of expressing seven and fourteen years' transportation.

"The last man to do it. See, here he comes; as perfect a gentleman as you ever saw.

They saw him take the rails down, turn his horse loose in the paddock, then they saw him coming towards the hut after putting the rails up. James Pritchard went to meet him, and held out his hand.

"I am afraid I ought not to take the hand of a sailor," said the stockman, "because I am only a convict."

James Pritchard said, after a glance at him, "I am a convict also, and I want your advice."

"You a convict!" said the stockman; "you have not the look of it."

"Neither have you," said James Pritchard.

Certainly not; he was a large, tall, melancholy man, with a carefully-tended moustache, but no beard or whiskers. A very brown man in complexion, and extremely comely in figure. The sort of man who could be backed to get the Victoria Cross every time he got the chance. He was a very gentle man. He put his hand on James—

"I think that we understand one another," was all he

said, before he passed into the hut, with his saddle and bridle on his arm.

"I do not quite understand you," said James Pritchard,

"I only mean that we are both innocent," said the stockman.

"I am not perfectly innocent," said James Pritchard; "I have been fearfully careless, and I am suffering for it."

"I," said the stockman, "have not been careless. I intended to do a certain thing for certain purposes, and *another* man did what I intended one time to do. The other man was my brother, but I pleaded guilty to save him."

"But why did not your brother come forward?" said James Pritchard; "he must have been a mean creature."

"He had got my mother and five sisters to keep, so what could he do?" said the stockman; "you don't understand Ireland at all. Well, come in, I will help you as far as you can."

"They went in together, but as they went in the

stockman whispered to him:—"Don't make the hut-keeper jealous."

So they sat together and talked. The hut-keeper listened all the time, and they therefore spoke on general subjects, such as horses, sheep, and other things which would only be partially understood by the English reader.

After a time the hut-keeper put the supper on the table, and, when they had eaten and drank, and were smoking, he said—

"This man has run his ship. I doubt that he will get three months if he goes back to Perth. We had better get the boss (master) to take him on for six months. He and you are much of a size; you can give him a suit of clothes."

"Well said, James Norton," said the stockman. "We will put him in some of my clothes, and ride over and see the governor to-morrow. You can ride, mate, I suppose—all sailors can ride a little."

"I have ridden very much in South America, when I was in the Royal Mail service."

"Then you can ride anywhere," said the stockman. "Now we can go to bed."

CHAPTER XI.

JAMES DISAPPEARS.

THE next morning beheld a strange transformation in James Pritchard; he was dressed exactly like the stockman. The hut-keeper asked him how he had slept, and he answered, "Remarkably well." He then asked the hut-keeper how he had slept, and the hut-keeper replied that he had never waked once in the night, a fact of which James and the stockman were perfectly aware, as they had been walking up and down in front of the hut, talking from the time when he first went to sleep until a very late hour.

"You will give me no other name but George," said James Pritchard.

"No," said the stockman; "my father's name is disgraced through me, though not by my means, and I will not reveal it."

"Are you going to make any effort to get out of this place?"

"I am hemmed in on all sides," said the man whom we shall for the present call "George."

"What do you know about the Murchison river?" said James Pritchard.

"More than you do," said George; "know it for two hundred miles."

"Is there any chance that way?" asked James Pritchard.

"I should say every chance in the world," said George; "but what do you know about the Murchison?"

"I guessed that there was a chance there, that is all," said James Pritchard. "I only know about it from Gregory's map."

"But if we do sight the telegraph wires," said George, "we have no money. I'll be hanged if I don't think that we had better stay where we are, all said and done."

They sat down together under a Banksia tree, and James Pritchard told George a certain secret.

"It is obvious," said George, "that we could never

escape through the colony. I suppose we had better try the Murchison. Is it not an awful pity that you took that nobleman's gold?"

"He made a good bargain," said James, laughing, and thinking of the match-box.

James, and George the stockman, rode away the next morning for the purpose of getting James employment at the station. They were never heard of any more. The hut-keeper thought that they were going to Mr. Stanford's, and said so. Mr. Stanford said that they had never come near him. They got lost in the bush, and died. Of that there was no doubt whatever.

Whenever you read about a matter being perfectly certain, you may, nine times out of ten, decide that it is totally untrue. If you notice, certain great papers seldom use that formula. Some of the Australian papers said that it was perfectly certain that the men were lost; a few others said that there was no proof whatever of the fact. It is certain that they never re-appeared; but it is equally certain that they were never, except for a short time, lost.

A very sad thing occurred up the Murchison that

year. At the very furthest station on that river, a very poor old cockney was hut-keeper to a Scotch shepherd. The Londoner, not a physically good specimen of his class, probably the most plucky in the world, had got the Scotch shepherd's tea ready, and his Bible on the table, when the shepherd came in. The shepherd did not eat his tea or read his Bible. He talked to the Londoner about many things, but he was most certainly ill; he had caught cold in the drenching rains, and he took to his bed with ague.

The Londoner nursed him tenderly. When two men are alone together, far from help or hope, it is a fearful thing for one to fall sick. No one knows what it is save those who have experienced it. The Londoner read his Bible to him as long as he could hear it; and when the cold stark look of death came into his face, he went for help. But he was frightened, and lost his way: he wandered through glens and gullies, through scrub and forest, until he found himself surrounded by a tribe of black fellows.

They treated him in the kindest manner, and communicated with other tribes, who were in communication

with the authorities. A sergeant, a cadet, and three troopers were sent; they brought the man back, and the magistrate at Perth said that he had lost his senses in the bush. He was found 126 miles beyond the country previously known by Europeans, and yet he declared that when he was lying in the bush at that point, he saw two gentlemen ride past him on roan horses, and tried to make them hear. He was examined, not of course officially, by a judge, and the judge, in an able paper, quotes this delusion as the best instance of bush-madness he had ever observed.

Judge Merton, however, being on circuit, met the tribe who had found the hut-keeper, and asked them collectively if they had seen the two gentlemen on horseback. "Oh, dear, no," the chief answered. "Hut-keeper fellow plenty frighten. Rain tumble down; thunder tumble down; hut-keeper fellow tumble down. Baaly mine make a light of two gentlemen in the bush."

It was no business of Judge Merton's, but he reserved his opinion.

We now bid farewell to James Pritchard and George the stockman, at least for the present.

CHAPTER XII.

THE RESULT OF BURNING THE DOLL.

MABEL SMYTHE was sitting with her sisters and hearing them dispute about some trifle, when Mrs. Smythe came into the room and begged her to come at once and speak with her.

They went into another room, and Mrs. Smythe sat down and looked at her daughter; Mabel saw that something very serious was the matter. "Mother," she said, "have you any further news from father?"

"How can we have, child? I am more and more certain that we shall see him again. Killick has only been gone three weeks, and they are beginning to believe the truth at the Admiralty. Admiral Dickinson now says there is a probability of your father and brother being alive; but, my dear, we are ruined."

"But, mother, how can we be ruined?"

"Your father left me a power-of-attorney to sell out, and I have lost it."

"How can it be lost?" said Mabel.

"I have looked for it for a month and I cannot find it."

"But how does that ruin you?"

"I am in debt, not very much, and I can get no money. We shall be turned out of house and home; I do not in the least degree know what to do."

"Mother, let us have another hunt."

"It is entirely useless, my dear, the thing is gone."

"Mamma," said a quiet voice, "I have followed and heard what you have been saying, and I am afraid that I am to blame. I do not know that I am, but I think so."

It was Ethel who spoke; her mother looked at her in wonder.

"My dear, you could have had nothing to do with it."

"Mamma, there was a blue paper on the top of your paper-basket, and we burnt the doll in it. Was that the paper?"

"It must have been," said Mrs. Smythe.

"I will undergo any punishment, mamma, but it was I who told Matilda to use it. I am entirely to blame."

Mrs. Smythe rose and went suddenly towards her—only, however, to clasp her in her arms. "My gallant, truth-spoken daughter," she said, "what do I care for poverty with such noble children around me? My dear, you have, for the time, ruined me, but you have told me the truth. Where did you say you found the paper?"

"At the top of the waste paper-basket, mamma."

"Then it is I who am to blame after all," said Mrs. Smythe. "God bless you, dear Ethel and dear Mabel. You have been good girls to me, and you will be rewarded."

"But surely you have earned our gratitude, mother," said Mabel.

"Hardly," said Mrs. Smythe. "Let us talk about ways and means. We must leave the house, and I do not see how to leave it; and what is more, I do not know where to go."

"If Killick were here!" said Mabel.

"Yes, my dear, but he is not, he has gone after your father and will not catch him before Valparaiso. What can we do? I am utterly at my wits' end. I have not claimed my pension at the Admiralty, and I doubt whether they would allow it; they begin to believe what I have all along said, that your father is not dead. If I believed that your father was dead I might mortgage my pension. As it is I cannot touch either his money or my own."

"We might have to sell everything," said Mabel.

"I am afraid so," said Mrs. Smythe.

"Ethel, go out of the room, like a dear child," said Mabel; and Ethel, though not always obedient, went, having the *auto-da-fé* of the power-of-attorney on her mind.

"Mother," said Mabel, "I can get you any money you want."

"My child, what do you mean? Has Killick left any power-of-attorney behind him with *you*? That would be an insult which I would never for an instant forgive."

"Oh, no, mother; he is not the man to insult one

like that. I only hand you over a letter which I received two days ago, and which I hesitated to show you."

Mrs. Smythe took it, and read it. It ran thus :—

"Miss Mabel,—I apprehend that there may possibly be some difficulty in your mother's affairs during the absence of Captain Smythe.

"Will you inform her that £1,000 will stand at her name at King's; but under the sole condition that she never asks the name of the person who paid it in.

"I may remark that I should not know you if I were to see you. It is an act of simple decent gratitude on my part. The money is as much your mother's as if she had earned it as a daily governess."

There was no signature at all. Mrs. Smythe said to her daughter, "Let me be quiet a little," and remained thinking deeply for nearly a quarter-of-an-hour; then she rose, and confronted her daughter very quietly, but very firmly.

"Mabel," she said, "have you ever seen this handwriting before, on your honour."

"No, mother, on my honour."

"I have a good mind to take the money," said Mrs. Smythe.

"Mother, you must decide about that. It is not offered to me, but to you."

"I would not hesitate," said Mrs. Smythe, "if I knew how he came by it. He owes us—I mean to say that I don't like people who scatter their money broadcast like this."

"He can't be a bad man, mother, if he offers you this money unsolicited."

"I don't know, Mabel. I don't say he was a bad fellow, but he was always a fool. I fancy that there was nothing ever very wrong with him. I will neither use the money nor refuse it. Let us keep our expenses down, dear, until your father and Killick come back."

"We shall have to use a little of this money to do that, mamma, shall we not?" said Mabel.

"Well, I suppose we shall. But we had better keep up appearances for the present; the money is practically ours, ten times more if it is ours in reality. It is very good of him, after all. But how could he have found out that I wanted it? That is the mystery. I have

only known it myself a fortnight, and only resolved to tell you to-day. He must have some close watch upon us."

"I do not understand you, mamma."

"No, my dear, I do not intend that you should; but I think that I have a right, under the circumstances, to keep my children out of lodgings. Now I have thought through it"—(she had, in reality, *talked* through it, in a way which some women, and men also, will)—"and I will do as I think proper, in the absence of your father. I will step round to King's to-morrow, and see that everything is right, and take my measures accordingly. Keep your sisters quiet, for I am going to write to your father."

"Whither, mother?"

"To Valparaiso. Did you not hear what Killick said?"

The letter to Valparaiso was partly written when it occurred to Mrs. Smythe to write a note to Lady Southerey, the wife of Rear-Admiral Sir John Southerey—a man who had fought his way from a midshipman, without interest, to a knighthood—accepting an invitation to her small and early party.

"They shall not make a widow of me yet," she said. "It was good of Lady Southerey to ask us. *I* don't want to go about with this fearful uncertainty hanging over us; but I won't give up yet, and the people at Lady Southerey's shall see it; and Mabel shall not mope either. I will go."

Perhaps she had better have stayed at home. She thought so afterwards.

CHAPTER XIII.

LADY SOUTHEREY'S PARTY.

ETHEL and Matilda having heard their mother's determination that she would go to Lady Southerey's party and take Mabel, in a new dress, at once went there themselves five days before the event came off, and stayed there (not counting lessons and bed) for three.

They had not got any money, and so they had to do without. Children do not want money to play, to act: Ethel and Matty enjoyed themselves at Lady Southerey's for three days, in the spirit; Mabel went there in the flesh, and hated it.

Many things happened at Ethel's and Matilda's party which did not happen at the real one; they went through the process of having the house cleaned from top to bottom, which ended in the upsetting of the water-jug,

and damage to Mrs. Smythe's bed-room ceiling. Then they proceeded to take the carpets up in the absence of nurse, and wax the floor with soap, in preparation for dancing, during which process nurse came in hurriedly, stepped upon the soapy part, and came down by the run. This led to what was known in that house as a "skrim," which I believe is short for skrimmage—that is to say, to a very wordy argument with raised voices, in which Ethel allowed her sister to do all the practical fighting, but encouraged her by uproarious and somewhat offensive laughter. Mrs. Smythe heard the riot, and came up to interfere.

In many houses the children would have been supposed to be "naughty," and punished. Mrs. Smythe did not see it in that light at all. She saw that the children had been playing, and inquired as to what they had been playing at; on being informed, she very wisely suggested to them that the house should be considered to be ready for the party, and that they should prepare their dresses; after which nurse had peace for one day.

At all events a sort of peace, for now Ethel and Matty rummaged every drawer and cupboard for things

to wear, and began to lay them together. On the evening of the real party they were dressed;—Ethel in an airy costume of long disused muslin window-curtains, cut, her mother thought, rather low, *bouillonné* with trimmings of crimson hemp door-mat surreptitiously obtained from the hall. Over this she wore a last year's ornament from the fire-stove (such as are carried about the street) for a cloak. She looked splendid.

Matilda was late in appearing. The prospective splendour of Ethel's appearance had determined her to cut out a new line, and adopt the *rôle d'ingénue.* After having hopelessly broken the sewing machine (which was on the hire system and had to be paid for) by trying to stitch two hearth-rugs together in the manner of a chasuble, she abandoned all attempts at extraneous display, and came into the drawing-room with her night-gown over her clothes, and her hair down, and no other ornament but a piece of red window-cord round her neck. Mrs. Smythe pronounced the effect to be charming, and acted Lady Southerey while she was waiting for Mabel. Ethel presented Matilda when Mabel came down. The pretty silly play was over, and the mother

with a sigh saw that the weary realities of life must begin again—not on the morrow after refreshing sleep, but now, with the wearied heart half broken by the day's anxiety.

At last Mabel came into the room dressed. Mrs. Smythe used, among her friends, to congratulate herself that her favourite daughter was ugly, and would therefore marry into the service, and be a companion to her when her husband and son were at sea. She began to feel alarmed now. Mabel's features were not at all regular, but her hair, her sweet eyes, her brilliant teeth (when she showed them, which was seldom), and her complexion would have set up a dozen beauties. And then, her expression, now with the dread of her father's death upon her—so quiet, so mournful, and so gentle.

"If she sings," said Mrs. Smythe to herself, "we shall have some heads broken about her. I wish I had not taken her out until Killick was home."

But out they went, to the intense delight of the two younger sisters. Let us precede them.

Lady Southerey was a very kind old lady, who never said any harm of any one; but there were two or three

other ladies there, who rather liked to discuss their neighbours' affairs. They had come early to get the best seats, and they began talking about many people. At last one said something which concerns us.

"Lady Southerey, do you know Mrs. Smythe?"

"She is my very good friend. She is coming here to night."

"Well, as she is your friend, I will say nothing about her. Only I think that it is odd that she goes flaunting about with her daughter, and not wearing mourning."

"Perhaps she can't afford to pay for it," said another lady. "She affects to believe that her husband is not dead, and wants to get that gawky girl of hers married at once, so that the victim may pay her debts."

"I assure you that you do not in the least know Mrs. Smythe," said Lady Southerey. "She is the best and noblest of women. Pray do not talk so of her."

They did not, but talked about other people as they came in. At last the door was thrown open once more, and "Mrs. Smythe and Miss Smythe" were announced.

For perfection of dress and carriage there were no two women in the room like that mother and daughter,

Most people knew their story, and most people took an entirely different view of Mrs. Smythe's conduct from that of the old ladies before mentioned. It was considered heroic instead of mean; and as the principal part of the company were connected with the sea, Lord Southerey having been a sailor, Mrs. Smythe found herself in the midst of an intensely sympathizing group at once, though only one of them all alluded to her trouble. She was a strenuous lady, whose husband had risen from the forecastle to an honourable position, like the late Admiral Boxer; and she mentioned incidentally that her husband had been away nearly five years with Ross in the Arctic Seas, and that all but she had given them all up for dead; but that she never would put mourning on for him, and that one day she saw him coming up to the door—"And I went out and got him his favourite old dinner, and cooked it myself, for my girl was out."

This lady was not a handsome woman to look at, she had a very brown complexion and coarse hands, on which her husband had put, for some inscrutable reason, diamond rings, which had the effect which he did not intend—that of calling attention to them. She, however,

had said the right thing in the right place, as everyone felt, and Mabel's face still had a gratified flush upon it when the butler was observed to have the door open and his chest expanded for a grand announcement. At the same time voices, apparently in hot argument, were heard upon the stairs.

"I tell ye that the number ye put in me hat was 27, and the number in me hand is 28. I'll be getting a hat when I go away that will go down at the back of me head and make me look like a fool, or one that won't go on at all at all, and make me look like a betting man."

"I will attend to it, sir," the butler was heard to say.

Lady Southerey had time to say to Mrs. Smythe and Mabel, "Who *can* this be?" when a splendid man, perfectly dressed, stood in the door, and the footman relieved his inflated lungs by shouting out:

"Lord Marcus D'Este."

Our old friend came in totally unconscious that the Irish, and possibly not the worst side of him, had been audibly exhibited on the stairs. He came into the room with the perfect manner of the best gentleman in Eng-

land. He approached Lady Southerey and said very quietly—

"I feel that I have almost a right here, Lady Southerey, because you are so exclusively nautical, and I am half a sailor. I have come to you the third day of my arrival in England on the strength of a card sent me when I happened to be at Pelsart's Island."

"I really thought you were at home," said Lady Southerey. "And what did you see at Pelsart's Island?"

"Nothing," said Lord Marcus. "It was my second visit after an interval of seven years. But may I be introduced to some of these ladies?"

Mrs. Smythe saw that he only meant one, and that one was Mabel. She had been excited by the talk of the lady who had told the story of her husband's return after so many years, and she had been laughing over Lord Marcus D'Este's behaviour on the stairs, and she looked her very best. His eyes were fixed upon Mabel and upon her alone.

There was a general introduction to the great traveller, for such he was. There were more arrivals. Mrs. Smythe got separated from her daughter, whom she

shortly afterwards saw sitting near the door with Lord Marcus D'Este.

"You have travelled very much," said Mabel, after a few commonplaces.

"Yes," he said, "I shall never cease from travelling until I find a good wife to keep me at home." And added to himself, "*You* would do that pretty easily, young lady." Indeed, it used afterwards jocularly to be said that Mabel might have been Lady Marcus, and, as afterwards turned out, Lady Dunorrin. She is perfectly happy as Mrs. Killick.

"With your propensity for roaming you would be bored at home. Where did I hear you say you had been last?"

"To Pelsart's Island."

"What did you find there?"

"Sand."

"What did you expect to find?"

"A ghost."

"Did you see one?"

"Dozens."

"Were you much frightened?"

"Not more than I am now. Miss Smythe, who is that man close to your mother?"

"I cannot say; I never saw him before. Is he a ghost?"

"Well, he perished miserably seven or eight years ago; that is all I know about him, except that I have seen him in the streets several times in the last two days, and I only at this moment recognise him. I must go and speak to him; pray wait here, for I have much to say to you about your father."

He seemed very much disturbed as he approached Mrs. Smythe and Lady Southerey. Two very handsome, singular-looking men, with long curled Spanish moustaches, were talking to them. They were at once presented to him.

"Mr. Wilson and Mr. Stevenson, Lord Marcus, the great South American travellers. They were the geographical lions until you came home, but you have eclipsed them."

"I can assure Mr. Wilson," said Lord Marcus, looking steadfastly at him, "that I have no intention of being a lion in his path."

"Thanks, my lord," said Mr. Wilson, looking at him with the most perfect coolness.

"Mrs. Smythe," said Lady Southerey, "allow me to present Mr. Wilson to you. South America is dear to you just now, and he has been there."

Lord Marcus watched her deeply interested. She only put out her hand with a pleasant smile, and began talking to him and to his friend Stevenson. She had not recognised James Pritchard.

That was a comfort, for more reasons than one. He wanted Pritchard, who had the mystery of Pelsart's Island, and he had been wishing that he was not dead. Here he was by some miracle alive.

Lord Marcus, with his restless Celtic imagination, had brooded over the mystery of Pelsart's Island for seven years. He had married a wife, but she had died in less than a year, and the glamour of the place had come on him again, and he had gone back, to learn nothing more. He had returned to England to hear, among other things, of the loss of Captain Smythe, and also to find at Lady Southerey's party the Kenneth Pritchard, supposed to be dead long ago, a lion of the London season.

"Are you going away, Mr. Wilson?" he said late in the evening, after having given every kind of encouragement to Mrs. Smythe and Mabel.

"I was waiting for you, my lord," was the only answer.

"Don't bring your friend," said Lord Marcus, and so Stevenson was left behind.

When they were in the street Lord Marcus lit a cigar, and, tapping his old acquaintance Pritchard on the shoulder, said—

"My dear fellow, you know where you are going?"

"Wherever you desire, my lord."

"You are going to Pelsart's Island with me. I have been there once since you escaped from there."

"I know it, my lord."

"How?"

"Because I have been there myself, and found some of your letters lying about."

"Is it, on your honour, worth going again?"

"I should rather think it *was*," said James Pritchard.

Lord Marcus went home with Pritchard to Morley's

Hotel, and was so late that he slept there. What passed in the interview, time will show.

A resolution was arrived at between them, which made a vast difference in the ultimate position of Captain Smythe and of Clare. Lord Marcus called on Mrs. Smythe early the next day, and found only Mabel, by accident. She was afraid that he admired her, and was ready to speak in general conversation of her engagement to Captain Killick. He gave her no opportunity.

"I have come, Miss Smythe, to say good-bye."

"Are you going to Paris?"

"No, I am going to the South Seas again. I wished to say, before I went, that I will do everything I can to search after and assist your father. Even I might do some good, you know."

"Even you!" said Mabel; "why, who could do more?"

"Killick," said Lord Marcus. "Well, we need say no more than this: I did not know of your engagement, or perhaps I should have had the pleasure of a more intimate acquaintance with you. I fly from danger heart-whole—well, I cannot go as far as to say *that*—but I fly."

"From me?" said Mabel, laughing.

"Partly, my dear young lady. I heard quite enough of you last night, of your steady bravery under misfortune, of your truth, of your piety to your mother, of your faith to the man you have chosen, of your love for your brother, and of your general worth, to make you a very dangerous neighbour to my peace of mind."

Mabel looked up to see if he could be in earnest. He really seemed for a moment as if he meant what he said. In all probability he did mean three-quarters of it, but he smiled as if there was some joke at the bottom of it all. He relieved her from all difficulty; he said—

"Come, let us part friends. I am going on an old quest to the South Seas again, and I will do everything I can to help your father and Captain Killick."

"I feel sure you will," said Mabel; "but it is a great question whether you can do anything if you go straight *there*."

"Where?" said Lord Marcus.

"To Pelsart's Island," said Mabel. "You will go mad over that place, if you do not mind."

"And, faith, I think I shall," said Lord Marcus. And so he went away.

A few weeks afterwards the people at Lloyd's were rather surprised to hear that the *Sylph* schooner, Lord Marcus D'Este, had "cleared" for the Caspian Sea. The more nautical part of that community had been under the impression that the Caspian was an inland sea: however, the *Sylph* not being under-written, it did not matter.

One thing was certain, wherever Lord Marcus went, he certainly never came near the Smythes any more before his departure.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE LOST ONES.

NORTH, south, and east, an unbroken sea of waving, nearly level, long grass. Westward, fifty miles distant, the dull lead-coloured peaks of the lower Andes, streaked with snow. An icy blast from the southern pole rushed through the grass, and the few sweet-smelling bushes which broke it made but a poor shelter for the crouching puma in their lee. Standing as we are supposed to do, in imagination, upon the spot, a more hideous scene of hopeless desolation can scarcely be conceived.

A black storm of sleet came whistling by, and when it was passed a large puma sat erect on his haunches and sniffed to windward. Something had disturbed him, for he trotted slowly away, growling, and at the same time an ostrich speeding swiftly by proved also that "there was something there besides foul weather."

As the weather cleared, a line of ten men might have been seen laboriously passing across the pampa. They were dressed like English men-of-wars'-men and mariners; they carried bundles, and though travel-stained, appeared stout and well armed; the foremost, the tallest of all, wore a captain's uniform, but carried a bundle on his shoulders like the others. It was Captain Smythe.

He was in deadly peril; of that there could be no doubt. How the ship got lost we shall know hereafter, and whose fault it was; but that was over. He had sent away, as soon as the case was utterly hopeless, the main part of his men, with fully provisioned boats. One had been swamped in his sight, but he hoped the rest might be safe; but none of his best men, with himself and his son Clare, were left on board the *Warhawk* when she began to break up; their boat, the last one, was not quite ready when they had to make a rush for her, Clare and his father bringing up the rear. When they had drifted some time they made an examination of their resources and found themselves better off than they had at first supposed, but totally unfit for a long voyage. The south-westerly gale,

which caused their original misfortune, continued its fury, and threatened to drive them off the land; under these circumstances, Captain Smythe, after three days without an observation, was able to beach his boat in the lee of a reef of rocks, and land his men, stores, and ammunition.

The sun came forth and he found where he was, two hundred miles from the wreck, on the coast of Patagonia —so far north, that it was hopeless returning to the wreck, the survivors of which, under his first lieutenant, would in all probability make for Santa Cruz; he, after some thought, determined to desert the boat and make for the Chupat river.

He informed his men of his determination, and they, being utterly dependent on him, of course acquiesced without a word. Had he made them a set harangue they would have wondered very much, and have fancied that his head was turned. He was the only man who knew where he was, and so when he told them that he was going to march northward they at once prepared to do so.

Such preparations as were necessary he superintended,

That they were well armed was a great thing, and he pointed out to them that they were advancing through a country abounding in game. About Indians, he frankly told them all he knew. He considered himself to be between two tribes, the Southern and the Northern Tehuelches, in a kind of debateable land.

These men, he proceeded to say, were exceedingly few in number, but of great stature; not treacherous or unkindly, but savages to be treated with confidence, and bold men. His object, he said, was to gain the confidence of the northern division of the tribe, and make for, if the worst came to the worst, the Argentine stations on the Rio Negro, where our flag would be respected.

He said little more, for there was little more to be said; armed with the short navy rifle, with fifty rounds of ammunition a man, there was no chance of carrying much provision or much bedding; still the Patagonian summer was approaching, and they had not more than five hundred miles to go in the very worst case.

So they started due west the first day until they got to the higher lands; on the second day they turned

northward, with the icy blast behind them—a great relief. They saw no game, but an incident occurred which gave them greater confidence in their captain than ever.

They were at mid-day halt, when one of the ordinary seamen, who had wandered away across the plain, came back evidently frightened, and said that he had been close to a large lion eating a camel, which had growled at him. "Come on to dinner, my men," said Captain Smythe, rising and taking his rifle. "Stay, we must not all go; come you, Clare, and Dickson, who has seen it." And they departed through the long grass across the plain, Captain Smythe leading, and the sailor carefully showing the way from the rear.

Sure enough there was the dead camel, only a guanaco after all, but where was the lion? Captain Smythe kicked about among the incense bushes, and at last got it to show itself.

A mighty beast, as big as most lionesses, and not unlike one; it sat up on its beam ends and regarded Captain Smythe fixedly, as though it thought that it had seen him before, but could not recollect where.

To the horror of Clare and of the sailor, Captain Smythe walked steadily up to it; it put out its right paw, and made feeble dabs in the air, then it began fizzing and spitting at him like a great tom-cat, and then when he was within ten yards of it, he raised his rifle and shot it dead through the heart.

"It was an enormous puma," he said quietly. "This is almost the largest, and utterly the most cowardly of the felidæ. There is not the remotest danger with them if you keep your head."

All hands having heard the shot, came up and looked with astonishment on the mighty beast as it lay dead on the grass. When its death was described by the younger sailor, they felt more than ever that a man who could walk alone up to a lion and kill it was the man to follow, and whilst broiling and eating such parts of the puma as Captain Smythe recommended (and which were very like pork chops) they agreed that if the captain could not get them out of this mess no man could.

"Clare, my son," said his father, after they had resumed their march, "it is not pumas we have to fear, but Indians."

"There seems to be no sign of them, father."

"I have seen three or four horse-tracks," said Captain Smythe, "and those fresh ones. They *may* be wild horses, but *they are very deep in wet places.*"

"What do you gain from that?" said Clare.

"That they carry burdens."

Still there was no sign of Indians, and but little of game. The further they went on, the more frequent were the horse-hoofs: and on the fourth night they lay down to sleep in a gully, near the place where we first saw them.

A watch had been set, and they had slept peaceably. When the morning got too chilly for sleep, they all awoke, and one lit a fire. Captain Smythe sat apart, and, with his note-book, was making up his log. Breakfast was got ready, and he was summoned to it: he saw at once that something was wrong.

Something was extremely wrong. Clare, who had been sleeping beside his father on the grass, was missing, rifle and all, and no trace could be found of him.

The morning was spent in useless search. The ground round the little creek where they had slept was

dry, and covered with incense-bushes, so they could get no trace. After a meal in the middle of the day, they started on their route, in hopes that he might have gone before; but still no signs of Clare, and in these weary, scrubby plains, a man might circle round and round for ever, without seeing any trace of the object he sought.

When they arrived at the bald plain, and the storm of sleet had passed, Captain Smythe called a halt, and addressed his men. It was at this moment when we introduced them to you at the beginning of the chapter.

CHAPTER XV.

DISASTER.

HE spoke very quietly: he said—"My men, I must go back; your sole chance of safety lies in your going forward on this route. My boy has not come this way, in my opinion."

"Then we will go back with you, as a matter of course," said the oldest of the sailors.

"That would be death for you," said Captain Smythe. "We are not more than 500 miles from the Argentine Republic. I *must* go back after my boy Clare."

But one after another said they would go back with him.

"I do not consider it my duty to take you back, after we have gone so far," said the captain.

"He cannot be far away," said the youngest sailor. "He is somewhere handy. Let us light a fire, and he

will come to it. I can't understand it. He was sleeping between me and your honour, and when I woke up he was gone."

"And I," said the man on guard, "cannot understand it either. I never kept watch better in *my* life, and I never saw him go."

"I think I will do this," said Captain Smythe: "We will all go back to the creek where we slept last night. He may see our fire and come."

"Where you go we go, sir," was the reply from the oldest sailor. "But, speaking respectfully, we are not going to leave Mr. Clare or you behind."

So they went back to the creek again. It lay in an abrupt dip in the plateau, nearly three hundred feet deep, with high and broken rocks on all sides of it. They clambered down the sides as it was getting dusk, on to a broad rock which projected into a deep pool, where they found the remains of their fire. A little dwarf beechwood grew about the place, with the broken boughs of which they made another fire. When all of them, dog tired, began to get sleepy, they had a ration of biscuit and turned in, as closely packed as possible.

The rifles were stacked, and a guard was set. So they slept.

Captain Smythe had given orders that he was to be awakened at the second dog-watch. When he did wake the east was getting bright, and the cold, pale, westering moon was looking down from the head of the glen. He started to his feet. The sentry must have slept.

It was too true. The marine in charge of the arms was dead asleep, with his head on his arm. And—heaven help us!—the arms were gone.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE BATTLE OF GILWINIKASH CREEK.

THEIR case seemed now utterly desperate. Captain Smythe uttered to himself a very short but most earnest prayer, and then turned to his men. It was no time for recriminations. The unfortunate marine who was the cause of the disaster looked more dead than alive, fearfully pale, and seemed to have a difficulty in standing upright. Captain Smythe saw that the man was suffering from the effects of extreme physical terror. It was necessary to reassure him before all things. A broken-down man just now would never do.

"Don't look in that manner, Jones. I am not going to kill you. The thing cannot be helped; you were overdone, and slept on your watch. I ought to have watched myself. There, now, don't begin to cry; that will do no good. That is better.

"Now, we must face the enemy, if he is an enemy, unarmed. They must have been after us from the first; they will soon show themselves; now they have obtained their object. Follow me."

He led them up on to the plateau above. They had not long to wait in suspense. There before them, between them and the rising sun—that was, *between them and the sea*—were the lurking foes who had been on their track from the first, and had at last entrapped and disarmed them. If Captain Smythe had not made the countermarch after his missing son Clare, they would not have been so tired, and the watch would have been kept.

There they stood, ninety gigantic Indians, perfectly silent, with very long spears in their hands. Captain Smythe hurriedly told his men to stay where they were, and they saw from his face that he had some new and singular grounds of hope.

He advanced alone with his hands behind him. At once twenty spears were pointed at him, and the failure of the temper of any one Indian, or an ill-understood word from the chief, would have sent them all into his body.

He took one hand from behind him and held it up; he said aloud in Spanish: "I see a guacho of La Plata there. I am an officer of Queen Victoria, an ally of the President of the Argentine Confederation, and I request him to interpret for me with these gentlemen."

The guacho came forward, looking rather shamefaced at being found in such doubtful company.

"Would you, sir," said Captain Smythe, speaking in Spanish still, "inform these Indians that there are some of her Majesty Queen Victoria's rifles missing, and that we fear they have been stolen? They have the Tower mark on them, and will inevitably be identified."

"I would not put it in that way, sir," said the guacho; "your life is not worth ten minutes' purchase if you do. They have got the rifles, as you know, but they do not know about the Queen of England."

"Are you a Christian?"

"God knows I am, sir, and will help you in every way I can."

"Thanks; then I wish to ask of you this: is the chief a man of great power?"

"A man of consummate power, sir, just at present. He is Blackdog."

"Good. Can you get him to come and talk to me by signs, and *bring his spear*?"

"Would it not be a thousand times better if he came without it, sir, you being unarmed?"

"I think not. We have lost one of the Queen's ships here lately, and some of our people are about. Tell him that, and that we shall be hunted for far and wide, and that there is no hope of mercy for him from Queen Victoria if he ill-treats us, and all that sort of thing."

"I do not know that he would listen to it, sir."

"Possibly, but there is no harm in your saying so. You seem an honest fellow enough, and I should wish to do you no harm. Will the chief keep his word?"

"Yes, he will certainly do that if he gives it."

"Then here," said Captain Smythe, "tell him after you have said all I told you, to meet me in the open, half way, but advise him to bring his spear."

"I do not understand the English, but they are a [illegible]ation, and I will do it." He went away to the

chief: the unarmed English, at their captain's direction, sat down upon the grass, Captain Smythe standing erect before them, facing the enemy.

The guacho spoke a few words with the chief; all the spears were lowered, and the Indians sat down; only the chief, the guacho, and Captain Smythe remaining standing.

It was evident that the honest guacho said something particularly strong about Queen Victoria, because the chief seemed rather afraid of advancing. He, however, at last came slowly towards Captain Smythe.

They met alone. The one a splendid English sailor, the other a gigantic though not bad-looking savage. Captain Smythe would have been glad had he been taller, but he was five feet eleven only, and Blackdog was six feet eight.

Captain Smythe laid his head on his hand to express sleep. Blackdog nodded. The captain then made the action of aiming with a gun, at which Blackdog nodded again. Then Captain Smythe gave signs of the most furious indignation, and Blackdog seemed loth to speak.

All this time the guacho was wondering whether Captain Smythe was mad; he was nothing of the kind; he had his own plan.

He lay down on the grass, made the motion of shooting with a gun, and then dying. Blackdog hardly understood him; after several mistakes he meant that they should die without their guns.

Then he rose and held out his hand, but Blackdog shook his head; he evidently did not mean to give up the guns. But Smythe continued making friendly signs to him, tapping him on the breast, and pointing to the spear which he held in his hand, giving him to understand that he wished to see him throw it. The savage understood that the Englishman wished to see the use of it, and made little difficulty in gratifying him. But he did not throw it, he handled it like a bayonet, in the usual Patagonian fashion. This was a deadly disappointment for Captain Smythe, who had fondly imagined that they habitually *threw* the spear; that he could have got the chief to exhibit his prowess, and for one precious moment have stood before him unarmed. "Had I had a bow and arrow," he thought, but he did not know

that bows and arrows are not used between the Rio Negro and Terra del Fuego.

In this fearful moment a new scheme must be devised to gain the power he determined to have at all risks. He took to admiring the spear, and the foolish savage, with knives enough about him (as he thought) for safety, gave it into his hands, not knowing with whom he had to deal. With every nerve in his body tense with excitement, Captain Smythe cast the spear away with his left hand, and rapidly passed that hand across his body under his jacket.

Then giving a spring like a rattlesnake, he with his free right hand struck Blackdog with fearful force on the chest, at the same time tripping his right heel with his left foot, throwing him heavily on his back on the grass. In another moment he was standing with his foot on Blackdog's chest, holding him down, and the gleaming barrel of his hitherto concealed revolver pointing at his heart.

For an instant both sides were paralysed; then the savages leapt to their feet with a yell, and Captain Smythe could see out of the corners of his eyes the

terrible "bolas" whirling round the heads of some of them. His own men he could not see; but the savages were afraid to move. That terrible American invention, the revolver, was perfectly well known to them, and they knew what it was likely to prove in the hands of the desperate Englishman with the golden stirrups upon his shoulders, who had struck down their chief alone before them all.

He shouted to the guacho, "Tell these men that I have ten shots about me, which means ten lives; and yours will be one if you hesitate. Say that my arm feels tired, and that unless my rifles are here in less than three minutes their chief and nine others are dead and their tribe exterminated by the vengeance of those who come after us."

The guacho translated with singular rapidity, having the fear of Captain Smythe before his eyes. A loud wail arose from the women, who were concealed behind the men; and one of them, over six feet high, dashed three or four chiefs right and left, and knelt before Captain Smythe. "Thank heaven!" said Smythe to himself, "we have got the women in

it; now we are saved. This must be Blackdog's wife."

"Tell her," he shouted again to the guacho, "that her husband and nine others die unless the rifles are brought."

It appeared that the ladies had taken the matter into their own hands, as they do sometimes in other places than Patagonia, and that Mr. Blackdog's wife had only come forward to gain delay. They pushed through the still astonished men, and laid the rifles down.

"Seize these rifles, men, and fire one in the air, any one."

That was quickly done. Blackdog was told that he might get up, which he did with a thoughtful expression of countenance, and the victory was complete.

It was a moment of triumph, but in the midst of it there came a feeling of bitter despair. Even if he should win his way to Europe, how could he face his family without Clare, and where was he?

CHAPTER XVII.

DISCUSSION.

THERE was friendship between the two camps, but Captain Smythe allowed no familiarity. The watch was duly set; and with such things as they had, which were very few, they traded with the Indians for guanaco and ostrich meat, and as night came down the tired men lay down together in the grass and slept: the Indians moved off a little way, but at Captain Smythe's request the guacho—whom we shall hereafter call Pedro—stayed with him until a late hour, with the distinct proviso, made for his own safety, that he was to sleep among the Indians. So they two walked up and down under the Southern Cross consulting.

Pedro was an honest wild fellow who had come out on to the steppes, *he* said, more from love of adventure than anything else. After a little more conversation,

however, he grew more confidential, and confessed that he was in considerable political complication at home, having, as he explained, taken a rather prominent part in the losing side of the last revolution in the Republic of which he was an ornament, and being in some danger of being shot until after the next revolution, which he said could not be far off now. Captain Smythe made great friends with him, and gave him a great deal of excellent advice, which he was perfectly well aware would not be taken.

"I am in terrible trouble," he said, at last. "I have lost my son."

"I know it, senor, and I know what has happened to him."

"In heaven's name, what?"

"Captivity among the Southern Tehuelches. It would seem that the outposts of both tribes were close together; and, as ill-luck would have it, your son fell into the hands of the wrong party, which is in the highest degree unfortunate."

"What will they do with him?"

"I cannot tell you. They are cut off from trade

at Santa Cruz, or they would hold him to ransom. This northern tribe would have given anything for him; they would very likely have left you to take care of yourself, until half your men were dead of scurvy, while they pushed towards Rio Negro with your son and communicated with the British consul at Buenos Ayres. When they had got a good bargain for him they would have come back, gentle, kindly children of the desert, and played good Samaritan to the remnant of your party at the rate probably of 2,000 dollars a head."

"If I were to make an alliance with this tribe, and attack the others—"

"You might find your son's clothes if you were very lucky. You would never see *him*."

"Then I must give him up and go home and face my family without him."

Pedro was silent for a time; then he said,

"If he is not ransomed soon, they might kill him. If you attempt to use this tribe in rescuing him, they will kill him."

"Do you see no hope?" said Captain Smythe,

looking in Pedro's face as one does into the doctor's when some loved one is ill.

"There is one chance," said Pedro. "You might march south after these men independently and bargain for your son. You would get him for a couple of rifles just now; but without horses you would lose many men by scurvy."

"I thank you for your advice," said Captain Smythe, "and I will think over it to-night. Now you had better go back to the Indians, or they will become suspicious of you."

And so they parted, and much happened before they met again.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE RESOLUTION.

CAPTAIN SMYTHE slept not at all that night, everything was so miserably bleak: the doubtful journey home, the reception he would meet with from his superiors, and lastly, the terror about Clare's fate, were enough to keep a less sensitive man awake. There seemed only one chance of getting at his son—marching boldly and independently southward, and trying to bargain; but the guacho had said something which Captain Smythe wished he had not said—to wit, that he, without horses, would lose half his men with scurvy.

Even now, so soon on the journey, two men were complaining to him of toothache and irritable mouths; if he had told them what he and his boatswain David alone suspected, that these were the symptoms of incipient scurvy, they would probably have fallen victims

in a very short time. He and David kept their own counsel.

It would be painful to follow poor Captain Smythe through the struggle of that night—the struggle between duty and inclination, between the love for his boy and the responsibility for his men. We shall see what way he decided.

At the first gleam of primrose-coloured dawn in the sky, he awoke his men, and made them get some food; when the camp was ready to move, he bade them fall in, and thus addressed them:—

"My men," he said, "there are times in the career of a sailor when discipline must be relaxed: for example, in the present case, I could order you to do what I wish, and you would obey. I, however, prefer to consult you. Carry arms!"

One, two, three—up went the beautifully clean little rifles, and the men, standing like statues, began to wonder what the captain was driving at.

"I have lost my son, as you know; he is among a hostile tribe. I need not tell you how much I desire to recover him; it is possible I may do so by going south,

but the expedition will be both difficult and dangerous—I should probably lose one-third of my force. On the other hand, by going north I can, in all human probability, fetch you through to the Rio Negro, without losing a man. I will be bound by your decision."

(He, as a last hope, tried to shift the responsibility from himself to his men. It was the only doubtful thing he ever did; but consider his temptations!)

"If any man refuses to go south with me, I will lead north; but I must have you unanimous. One man's vote will send me north to civilization. Any man who objects to go south into the new danger, ground arms."

Not a rifle moved; the men stood as quietly as the sailors before Trafalgar, or the soldiers at the wreck of the *Birkenhead*. They knew their man, and the manhood which was in them responded to his. They would go.

Captain Smythe's face flushed as he looked at them. They were standing with their faces to the south when they gave their tacit consent to go after their young officer. Smythe answered their self-sacrifice by a greater one. He deliberated no longer, but he gave the, to them, astounding order—

"Shoulder arms! *right about face!* Quick march!"

They brushed away swiftly through the grass towards home and safety, every step carrying them further from their gallant young officer left hopeless there far to the south; his father with frowning brow and bent head bringing up the rear. The thing was done, and their instinct told them why. The man had put his duty to the service above his love for his only son.

David fell out, there was something the matter with his boot, he pretended, and came beside the captain. He whispered to him:—

"Are you going to leave Master Clare? The men would go with you."

"I am going to leave him," said the captain. "I have been with God about it all night, and He has said, at last, Yes. When a man enters the service his men are his first duty. Could you fellows reach the Rio Negro without me?"

"No, captain."

"Then why argue? If my heart is broken what does it matter? there are, at least, fifty women and children dependent on these men; it is better that Clare should go than they should be ruined. Say no more about the

matter, I have made my determination, David. But I wish you to tell me this, and I wish you to think well before you speak."

"I will do so, sir."

"You were on the bridge with me. What was the last order I gave before she struck?"

"I'd swear to anything for a man like you, captain," replied David, "but there's more in it than me. I wasn't the only man on the bridge by several; and it was the talk of the ship before the boat got away."

"What did I say?" said Captain Smythe.

"You said east-half-east," replied David.

"Then I am a ruined man," said Captain Smythe.

"It will go 'ard," said David, "*very* 'ard. But seein' as kissing goes by favour, and a friend at court—Why, I can tell you" (here he told a story which was not edifying in a seamanlike point of view), "and he is driving his carriage now, twenty years afterwards."

"Things are different now," said Captain Smythe; "and he was rich, while I am poor. I fear that I am utterly ruined. But I would not care for that so very much if I could take my boy home to my wife."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE WEARY WATCH AT HOME.

THINGS at home had become bitterly uncomfortable, for Mrs. Smythe and the pleasant old home had lost all its gaiety. Captain Smythe's expenses in outfit had been very large; he left England owing £500, which he left Mrs. Smythe to pay, and giving her power-of-attorney to sell what she liked out of the funds; what became of that luckless document we have seen.

As time went on her heart began to sink within her; nothing was heard of her husband, and his creditors began to press her; the £500 which had come from the mysterious source was exhausted, and she had nothing left. Going to the Admiralty, was only once more to be confronted with long faces. She was driven to her brother for advice and assistance, a thing she hated, for her husband and he had had a few words

about some trust-money of hers which her husband had wished to invest in a Derrick Company; he had refused his consent, and the thing had afterwards failed, which gave him rather a crow over Captain Smythe, and indeed he had not been slow to tell him, that but for his foresight all his sister's money would have been lost; she therefore was naturally fearful that he would cast this matter up again.

He received her very kindly, and put his wits to work for her.

"First and foremost, my dear Eliza," he said, "you must make me your banker to some extent, and you must make up your mind to let your house for the season. I can, it so happens, get you a tenant."

"But Mabel and the children."

"They must adapt themselves to altered circumstances. If I was in your place, I should look out for lodgings at once."

"But might not our creditors seize on our furniture, while our tenant was in possession?"

"That, of course, for the honour of the family and

my own honour, I will provide against; your tenant will be a friend of mine; he shall be safe."

And so she acquiesced, for she did not see what else to do; she went home and told Mabel and the children plumply what she was about to do. Mabel, of course, came into her mother's views, and assisted her in every way; in a week they had moved their nick-nacks into a lodging at Greenwich. Matilda and Ethel were peculiarly good, for Mabel had impressed upon them how very doubtful it was that they would ever see their father or Clare again, and that they must not give trouble.

But when they saw the comparatively mean house at Greenwich to which they were condemned, when they found that it was not theirs, and that they could not go all over it if they liked, they grew petulant and troublesome. Mrs. Smythe had taken it for two months certain; on the fifth morning, the landlady, a most virtuous but hideous old maid, gave her warning to leave at the end of that time, on the ground that her feelings had been outraged beyond the possibility of Christian forgiveness. She said that although she was slightly blind in one eye, she could see as far through a brick wall as anyone else.

It appeared on enquiry that an old doll, recognized as being one of the Smythe family, had been found drowned head downwards in a water-jug; on one of the protruding legs was found a label with this legend:—

"Whoever finds this body will understand that it is the body of one-eyed Miss Rossiter, who drowned herself in despair because Mrs. Smythe locked up her tea-caddy."

The fact of the matter was, that the children prowling about had heard Miss Rossiter say to the maid that Mrs. Smythe was not a real lady because she locked up everything; hearing this said about their own mother, who in their eyes was the most perfect of ladies, these guerilla bands had at once declared war, without waiting for orders from headquarters.

Mabel was in the room when the case was stated, and at once fired up.

"Those children never told a lie in their lives, Miss Rossiter," she said, "and you know they heard you say that our mother was not a lady."

"Mabel, my dear, be quiet," said Mrs. Smythe.

"I shall not, mother."

"I never had lodgers before who locked up their things as if one was a thief," said Miss Rossiter, on her dignity.

"Why do you object to their being locked up unless you want to get at them yourself?" said Mabel, who when her mother was in question was a dragon. "If I was an honest woman keeping lodgings I should insist on their being locked up."

"An honest woman!" cried Miss Rossiter, "do you mean to say I am not?"

"Now, don't raise your voice, Miss Rossiter, in my mother's presence; that is a thing I never allow. As long as you behave yourself you will find us good tenants, but if you annoy my poor afflicted mother in any way, I beg to point out to you that it is not *her* you will have to face but *me*—quite a different matter."

Miss Rossiter left the room with considerably the worst of it, but the mischief was done. Mrs. Smythe never alluded to the doll business, but Mabel did, and rebuked the children for doing it. She was met by flat rebellion.

"*She* began it," was all the answer Mabel got. "She had no right to say that mother was not a lady. She is an impudent, vulgar old puss."

So, in addition to her other troubles, poor Mrs. Smythe lived in her poor little lodging in a state of mild siege. Her children did what fighting was necessary, that indeed was very little, and saved her all the annoyance they could. When they saw how worn their mother was by the strangeness of the house, by her ever increasing anxiety, and the worry of pecuniary matters, they would even have made friends with Miss Rossiter; but, as is often the case, the first advance on their part was taken to be a sign of weakness, and a battle had to be given until the enemy was driven back into his own lines. The children never were cross in their mother's presence, it was Mabel who had to bear *that*, and nobly she did it.

When they were asleep sacred confidences would take place between mother and daughter too solemn for repetition here. They would sit very late, when the tide was late, far into the night, watching the ships coming gladly up from the sea, and hand in hand would

wonder if any ship would some day bring the men they loved best back to them together.

But time wore on, and Mrs. Smythe, getting weaker, leant more and more on Mabel, who saw that the arrival of each mail with its accompanying disappointment was a fresh blow to her mother.

CHAPTER XX.

TROUBLES ACCUMULATE.

THE march of Captain Smythe across the Pampas seemed at first likely to be a successful one; but it was soon evident that it would be longer and more difficult than he had anticipated, from a cause principally which he had not anticipated, old sailor as he was. The shoes which the men had were not adapted to a land journey, and gave out in the stony plains and tripping grass; the men began to get footsore and lag behind one by one in places where to lose one's party was death. The boys gave in first, but that was remediable, for there were only two of them, and they could be carried sometimes; but then the men began to fall out and sit down, delaying the others, for Captain Smythe insisted on bringing up the rear, and he would leave no man behind; so all had to wait until the weaker were

rested, for they could not stir a step without him—he alone could help them in a worldly point of view. If he died they thought that they must all go.

They did not want greatly for water, and the weather was overcast and cool, with frequent showers of rain, which, while wetting them, filled the water holes and smaller creeks; they found brushwood also in the hollows for fire, and for the first five days did not fare badly; it was only on the sixth day that the walking began to tell upon the men, as I have mentioned before.

For some (to Captain Smythe) unaccountable reason, the Indians under Blackdog had left them the very first day of their march. Their conduct in this case was perfectly well explained afterwards, though at the time Captain Smythe accounted for it by mere sulky caprice; he began very soon to wish that they had not left him, they might have traded for food and have got the Indians to show them the best camping places, with promises of reward at the Rio Negro; they could have kept them in check too with the most wonderful ease. However it was no use regretting the matter now, there was enough to think of without that.

They did not actually suffer for food; game was just so abundant as to enable him to get one shot at large game in the day, which was enough for them, as he never missed, being perfect master of his weapon. Nevertheless things got from bad to worse in a monotonous manner which it would be weary to record and weary to read. The dread disease, scurvy, had set in most severely, and that most miserable thing had to be done, the holding of a council of war, for the weakest were praying to be left behind to die, and it was evident that some very strong measure must be taken.

"My men" (he never said "boys," he considered it derogatory), "I have called you together to take you into my confidence; that I can do in a few words. Look around you, see our condition, and see whether we can do anything to mend it."

Out stepped David without hesitation. "Captain," he said, "how far have we to go? come, on your honour as a British officer, tell us the truth, and do not buoy us up with false hopes."

"On my honour, men, 397 miles."

The merry faces fell. David was ready to speak again, the men had evidently been in consultation.

"Suppose, sir, the strongest were to push on and send help back to the others; it have been done more than once in these cases."

"I agree. I think it is the only thing to be done. I was thinking of that myself," said Captain Smythe. "Will those who think themselves thoroughly able to do the distance hold up their hands?"

Only eight did so. The others who would not face the march looked at him with despairing and piteous eyes; but thought it was better to stay here, in peace and alone, than face the hideous sufferings which they had endured lately.

"Good," he said. "Now, four men are certain to escape if you follow my directions."

"We will follow you anywhere, sir," said the spokesman of them, David.

"Follow me?" he said. "Do you suppose that *I* am going to leave these men here? You must be mad."

He spoke with such extreme emphasis that no one dared reply. There was a brightened look—almost a

look of triumph—among the scurvy-stricken wretches on the grass, who raised a feeble hurrah, while there was a corresponding look of dismay on the countenances of the stronger men who were to go.

"We cannot do it without you, sir," said David in a low voice.

"Then you cannot do the thing at all," said Captain Smythe, "because I am not going to leave these men behind, you know. I have sacrificed my own son to this expedition, and I am not going to desert the men now who were ready to go with me after him. I will give you the route so that you cannot miss it. You, David, take the command; and, men, obey your officer. Pooh! if eight strong sailors, well-armed, cannot get over 350 miles of country, with a tolerable amount of game, plenty of water, and no Indians, the service must be going to the devil. All I pray of you is to remember that our lives depend on your speed and good conduct. You must march in an hour."

That hour was spent by him in giving directions to David, and in writing some hasty letters home, for he had his camp writing roll with him. The men spent it

in encouraging and taking leave of their sick shipmates. Then the word was given and they marched away northward over a roll in the ground which hid them for a time, but once more they saw them rise over a ridge in the prairie about two miles off, and turn round, waving their caps. Then they hurried over the ridge, and they saw them no more.

Captain Smythe remained but a very short time gazing over the prairie. It was not a time to brood. He knew his case was desperate, and he did not dare to think now. He knew that thought would come to him quickly enough in the watches of the night. Now was the time to act.

He went among his men, cheerfully encouraged those who could move, and comforted those who could not. Before night came down they were in a more comfortable camp than they had been at for a long time, and he, taking his rifle, was walking away a little distance across the prairie, when he was called back. They had gone to awaken one of the two boys who was asleep in the grass, to his supper, and had found him dead.

He carefully attended to the removal of the body into

the long grass, and then turned away again, thinking how they would bury him with their bayonets on the morrow; and then he said to himself, "But who will bury the last?"

For he had determined to hope no more; he knew the effect which the first death would have on the others, and the despair which would settle down on that lonely camp when darkness came on. He knew that despair assists scurvy, as terror assists zymotic diseases. For himself he did not care; always loving life, he had never feared death, but now he loved life less. Clare was hopelessly lost, and if he escaped he would have to undergo a court-martial which must go against him. Still, in spite of his own troubles, his heart was full of pity for his poor patient uncomplaining people, and he faced the fact manfully that there was no chance for them; had there been a wild chance of escape before, there was none since this boy's death.

Then came the fearful self-tormenting question, would he not have performed his duty better by going on with the strange men?—the bravest men, in extreme situations, without a solitary friend to give counsel or

comfort, are apt to self-torment themselves with such questions. Solitary responsibility like that of Captain Smythe's is a terrible thing at all times; only cowards, however, yield—the brave man acts. Smythe knew that if he began vacillating now he should lose his head altogether. After a few minutes he determined that he was perfectly right, and he thought he would turn to go back, for he had wandered very far; it was getting dusk, and he wished to lie down and sleep.

He trembled, as brave men do sometimes, and uttered some inarticulate exclamation; for within ten yards of him, between him and the twilight, stood a horrible and gigantic figure in the form of a man; the features on what seemed to be the head were utterly undistinguishable in the fading light. The thing stood perfectly motionless between him and his camp, and uttered no word, but from the grass all round came the low laughter as from a hidden chorus of hissing devils. The end had come quicker than he thought; he was entrapped by a hostile tribe, but even then he would not fire in self-defence, for he thought of his poor shipmates lying in the grass.

CHAPTER XXI.

HELP FROM AN UNEXPECTED QUARTER.

THE horrible being before him—more like the creature in "Frankenstein" than a human being—burst into a shout of diabolical laughter, and came towards him with its hands stretched out. It was Blackdog!

The revulsion from despair to high hope was so sudden that Captain Smythe utterly lost his presence of mind, and did not regain it until Blackdog was within three feet of him, totally unarmed. He did not offer to come nearer, but stood grinning and talking rapidly. One by one the other Indians arose from the grass, and laughed too in high glee; then they closed round him, and among them he saw the honest Pedro smiling also.

He came forward. "What is the meaning of this?" said Captain Smythe.

"It means merely that we have not lost sight of you from the first, and that we are come to assist you."

"I wish in heaven's name you had come before. Why did you not?"

"Simply because Blackdog is an extremely cunning savage, sir, and wanted to make the best bargain out of you that he could. You see how completely I am confiding in you. He wanted to prove to you how hopeless it was to escape without his assistance. Now you only have to bargain with him."

"Make any bargain you like," said Captain Smythe. "I will fulfil it. If he can save our lives I will keep his tribe rich for two years."

"He will do it, but he will want a hostage when he gets to the frontier," said Pedro.

"Whom?—myself?"

"No; me. Mind, I put my life in your hand, captain, in doing this. See that you don't fail me."

"You are a brave fellow," said Captain Smythe; "but what can I do for *you*?"

"Make peace with my Government, and let me get

back to my wife and my ranche, and I will give my word to trouble politics no more."

"We must do more than that, my man. But I fear Blackdog has come too late. One of the boys died this evening, and the others are too ill to move."

"But they can ride?"

"Ride, I suppose they could; but where are the horses?"

Pedro looked at him in silent amazement. "Where are the horses? Well, they have been picketed within five miles of you ever since you have landed. Do you suppose they were going to allow *you* to get hold of them and ride away armed?"

"Why, of course," said Smythe, suddenly bethinking him of the fact long forgotten, "the Eastern Patagonians live on horseback."

"How did Senor Captain ever forget that?" said Pedro. "But come, let us go to the poor men and comfort them. Go first alone, or they will fire."

Captain Smythe sprang through the grass like a deer. When he was within earshot he shouted out,

"Cheerily, men, cheerily! We are saved. Blackdog and Pedro are here."

He had time to say no more, for eight or ten Indian women bore down upon them with lighted torches. They kindled up a great fire, until the prairie was light all round them, and then they began to tend the men, with now and then an exclamation of pity. The men never approached them that night, nor did the women go near the rifles, which were now in full blaze of the fire, to Captain Smythe's great anxiety, for he had placed them in the dark, away from their tiny blaze, even at a time when he did not believe that an Indian was within 100 miles of him. The women made the sailors as comfortable as they could with grass pillows and skins, and then went away, Pedro coming into their camp, and sitting before the fire: Captain Smythe put the two soundest men to watch the rifles, and came and sat beside him.

"We shall do now, captain," said he. "You see I sit here because, in case of treachery, I should be the first to fall."

"That is brave of you. I can understand you, a

Christian, and by extraction a Spaniard, being chivalrous and kind, but what animates these savages? Blackdog seems, on the whole, a noble fellow."

"You don't know these savages as well as I do, sir. You ask what animates him? Well, fear and avarice. The Argentine Republic gave these people a lesson a year or so ago, and they don't want another; they want to stand well with them and trade. And Blackdog had to go to Buenos Ayres to make terms, and that impressed him considerably. To tell you the truth, I made his acquaintance there, because you never know what may happen in our country; and he believes in me, because I was in a very tolerable state at that time—one of the greatest dandies in the place, for I had sold my year's stock and was spending the money. I have told him that Buenos Ayres only exists by the will of the Queen of England, who could put it in her pocket to-morrow if it was worth her while, and that her rewards are as splendid as her punishments are terrible. Then he wanted to know, if Queen Victoria was so powerful, why she could not keep her canoes afloat (he was alluding to your wreck), and I told him that the devil

had done that while she was asleep, but that she had waked up, and had had the devil fetched in chains to London, and that therefore, he must take great care what he was doing. You see I followed up your first cue, sir."

"You should not have humbugged the man so," said Captain Smythe, and was going to give him a lesson on the nature of truth, but nature was too strong for him, his eyes closed, opened, closed again—the deadly weariness of those last few days was too much for him, and he rolled over dead asleep against Pedro, who laid his head gently down, and put a pillow of skins beneath it.

It was broad day when he awoke and staggered to his feet, with a feeling of horror—he had slept upon his watch; where were the rifles? There they were safe enough with two men guarding them, but not the two men he had set the night before. The men, alive to their danger, but not wishing to waken him, had set their own watches; he thanked them with deep earnestness, and then looked around him.

The sun was just showing, and the men were rising

from their sleep and sitting up around the embers of the fire with their faces turned towards him, watching what he would do. To the east, at a short distance, were the gigantic Indians, forty in number, with their long shadows thrown towards him across the plain, motionless. The cool dry air came briskly from the distant Andes and whispered in the grass; the sky was clear, and the whole scene most beautiful and hopeful; Captain Smythe did not hesitate for an instant, he looked at his men, knelt down, and bowed his head in prayer. There was not one who did not follow his example.

Pedro, who was standing beside Blackdog, crossed himself and bent his head, the first time for many a long day. When he raised his head again the Englishmen were upon their feet talking to their captain.

"What were they doing, these English?" asked Blackdog.

"They were invoking the God of the Christians, who never deserts them," said Pedro, quite forgetting that they were heretics, and therefore,——

One thing only remained to be done, to bury the boy, who had died the night before; Pedro had been busy

over this, and Captain Smythe found a grave ready: he thanked Pedro with a look; the body was brought up, the face covered with a cloth and laid by the grave; Captain Smythe raised the cloth from his face and looked into it; it was very quiet and calm, and he replaced the white cloth tenderly, thinking, "Will any one ever do for my boy what I am going to do for him?" The sailors stood by bare-headed with their rifles grounded, while the wondering Indians with their towering forms stood in a circle round them. Captain Smythe took his prayer-book from his breast-pocket and began the Burial Service; reading, as the majority of naval captains do, most impressively and well. His voice only faltered once at the passage, "in the full and certain hope of a joyful resurrection,"—perhaps he was thinking of Clare.

Then the men advanced and fired a volley over the boy's grave, to the great admiration of the Indians; then all was over, and they made preparation for departure.

"That was the boy Dickson, was it not?" said Captain Smythe to one of his men.

"Yes, sir."

"Gallant little fellow; I forget where we got him."

"*Chichester* training ship, sir."

"Ah, I remember. Well, his troubles are over. God rest his soul!"

And in an hour they were far away across the plains, leaving the little grave solitary for ever.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE RIO NEGRO.

THE mysterious horses were found to be none of them over seventeen hands high, and many not fifteen, but of good form and spirit. The men, who had loaded after the funeral salute, slung their rifles and painfully mounted. There was a little difficulty about this at first, for the horses were slightly too lively for the weakened men; but as each man had an Indian who seemed nearly as fit to carry the horse as the horse to carry him, beside him, they soon got on very well indeed.

Captain Smythe, Blackdog, and Pedro rode first, Blackdog completely unarmed as a sign of hospitality and good faith. Nothing noticeable occurred until the second day, when, following the trail of their advance party, they picked up the first man who had dropped,

and whose unutterable joy and astonishment was painful to see.

"Ah! captain," he said, "if you had come on they never would have left me behind."

"I thought you were as strong as any, Richards," said the captain, as soon as the man was put on a spare horse.

"Ah! I kept back the truth, because I thought I could get through."

"Did Darrel leave you behind?"

"Oh no. There was a fight about it, and they forced Darrel on. All discipline was broke when you left us."

They came up with the whole party next day, camping ten miles short of where they should have been, and sadly disorganised. Captain Smythe's presence restored order, and in ten not unprosperous days they were on the Rio Negro, at the point for which Pedro had headed, for his own purposes.

The last few days' travelling showed Captain Smythe how utterly hopeless his original scheme had been. He was unaware that Patagonia is separated from the Rio

Negro by a desert which ends in the Gulf of St. Matias, an almost waterless plateau, three hundred feet above the Atlantic, and which is called the Traversée. It not only separates Patagonia from civilization, but it divides the fauna and flora of that country from that of the rest of America. (For example, the ostriches which they had been hunting were the *Rhea Darwinii*, not the *Rhea Americana*, a larger bird.) To have travelled this on foot would have been a hopeless impossibility.

It was rather tempting for Pedro to look at his native country, where was his farm and his household gods, without being able to go there. He bore it like a man, and explained to Captain Smythe that he had come to this spot, nearly fifty miles up the river from Patagonia, "for safety."

They were just opposite a little military station which the Argentine Confederation had placed there for the purpose of overawing our friend Blackdog in this particular part of the river. It had entirely that effect, although the means seemed inadequate to the end. As Captain Smythe shortly discovered, the armament of this fortress (which, if you had not been in the secret, you

would have supposed to be an Australian shepherd's hut) consisted of the Argentine flag—which, as the signal halliards had long been broken, was actually nailed to the mast—an officer (in disgrace), two invalids, five muskets, and an old nigger to do the cooking. However, it did its work, and bid defiance to Patagonia, Blackdog, and his four hundred giants most efficiently. It was like the solitary English sentry whom Wellington put on the bridge of Jena in Paris when Blucher desired to blow the bridge up. "You can blow the bridge up if you like," said that great commander, "but take particular care that you do not blow up my sentry, whom I decline to remove." And lo! there stands the bridge of Jena to this day, and will stand unless the Communists should untimely blow it up some day. Blackdog no more dared touch a shingle on that bungalow than he dared attack Buenos Ayres.

The party kept in the background, out of sight behind some trees, while Captain Smythe advanced towards the river, here about 150 yards broad, and running between wooded banks. On the other shore there was an aged negro (the commissariat of that division of

the army), washing clothes out of a canoe. He hailed him.

The old negro instantly got into the canoe, and paddled across. Allowing for the current, he went up stream, and came straight to the captain's feet, who thanked him in Spanish. The old negro said nothing, but made a noise in his inside, like a soda-water cork; half-way over he made another noise, in the same region, like a frog croaking; and when Captain Smythe got out on the further shore, he went higger, rigger, rigger, rigger, rigger, washed his hands of the Captain, got into the canoe again, and began sorting the linen.

This was extremely disconcerting, and the Captain concluded that the man was mad; however, he climbed the bank, and found the sentry at his post certainly, but fast asleep on a bench, with a silk handkerchief over his face, to keep the flies off. On being shaken, he appeared to use bad language in his sleep, but he never awoke.

He passed into the interior of the place, and saw the commandant, a very nice and gentlemanly-looking young officer, sitting on a rocking-chair, smoking, and

reading a French novel. Captain Smythe addressed him.

"Señor, I am an officer of her Britannic Majesty's service, and I have unfortunately lost my ship. I have marched my men from the Gulf of St. George——"

He was not allowed to go any further—

"It is surely not Captain Smythe, of the *Warhawk*," said the commandant.

"Assuredly so," said he, wondering.

"I am so glad," said the young officer. "One of your boats reached Patagones a month ago, and the Government have sent a vessel down to see after you."

"I am deeply indebted to them," said Captain Smythe.

"It was only their duty," said the officer: "but how have you got through the Indians? You have done a wonderful thing. Have you lost many men?"

"I have got them all but one. I fell in with Indians at one time, and they stole our rifles. I managed to get the chief down, and held him at my mercy until the women brought them back."

"Noble! And the cacique's name?"

"Blackdog."

"That abominable old scoundrel! You were lucky to save your life. And he made a bargain to bring you on, I suppose. If you can decoy him to this side of the river, I will get you off *that*."

"My dear sir, I must keep terms with him."

"Well, if you knew what an old rascal he was,"—murmured the commandant, discontentedly. "But, however," he said briskly, "this is neither business nor hospitality. We must turn out the garrison, and get your men across. Does he require a hostage? If so, one of my fellows shall go; they wouldn't mind it much, and it would not matter if they did."

"I have already a hostage—offered most generously—one Pedro."

"What Don Pedro Rexilla! Dear madcap! just like him. Then I suppose he has failed."

"In what?"

"In finding payable gold in the eastern slope of the Cordillera. I told him that the drift was too confused for the gold to collect in payable quantities."

"He spoke to me about some political trouble."

"Yes; he had some words with a political enemy,

whose party was then in power, and he left his man for dead; but the man is alive, and is going to marry Pedro's sister, and his own party are in. So he had better come back soon, or all the good things will be gone."

"Could he not have a quarrel with one of the present office-bearers, leave *him* for dead, and take his place?" said Captain Smythe, sardonically.

"A very good parliamentary move," said the commandant. "I will tell him that you suggested it. Here, Pedro, Antonio, Sanchez, rouse yourselves." And when what had to be done was explained, they were nimble enough; they had the men across in an hour and comfortably housed.

Before night, Captain Smythe crossed alone, and conferred with Blackdog and Don Pedro. He left Blackdog grinning with pleasure, and shook hands warmly with Don Pedro, having told him the latest news. He was utterly astonished at the difference in Don Pedro: the mean clothes which he had worn during the march were replaced by a costume splendid enough for the bull-ring at Rio, and yet he did not wear them like a picador, but like a gentleman: a

jacket of green, covered with silver, open over his shirt; velvet breeches and close-fitting leggings, silver spurs, and a broad flapped hat with ribands, were his costume; he sat his magnificent mustang as only a South American can sit a horse, but with the courtesy of a Spaniard or an Englishman, the two great horse-riding nations, he dismounted before Smythe spoke one word.

"Were I not assured of your perfect safety, my dear sir," said Captain Smythe, "I should not permit you to remain; but Don Alphonso tells me that Blackdog dare not hurt a hair of your head. You shall know soon that you have served one who never forgets—the Queen of England. For such services as you have rendered to me, you will find the only acknowledgment which I can give in the hands of the commandant. I will hurry on, and settle with these savages, through our consul, as rapidly as possible."

So they waved their hands and parted. Smythe arranged for his men to advance under escort of the kindly Argentines, while he pushed on to Buenos Ayres on horseback. Before he went, he gave his gold watch

and chain to Don Alphonso, to give to Don Pedro with his remembrances, and would have forced a valuable diamond ring on Don Alphonso, but he would not have it, but insisted on one of less value.

"God speed you, brave captain!" said Don Alphonso, as he went away, "and send you safe to England, home, and happiness."

"I go to England, home, court-martial, and degradation," said our captain sadly.

"Then come back here, and be our Dundonald," said the other. "We can always show you plenty of fighting; and we have warm hearts though we have quick tempers."

CHAPTER XXIII.

AN UNEXPECTED ARRIVAL AT BUENOS AYRES.

IN six days Captain Smythe was safe in the consulate at Buenos Ayres, settling matters with the consul. There was no difficulty about the subsidy—not a very grand one in the eyes of civilization—which was to be paid to Blackdog. Everything that could be done in other ways, said the kind-hearted consul, should be done. He only hoped that Blackdog would not make a beast of himself with the subsidy. The men should be fetched up and attended to. Meanwhile, Captain Smythe must stay at the consulate in absolute quiet until the next steamer sailed. As for his statement, he must make it to-morrow, when he was more himself.

Captain Smythe started at the expression, but allowed that the advice was good, and thanked the consul, who himself showed him to a bedroom, not without curiosity.

As Captain Smythe approached the looking-glass, he started back against the consul, thereby repeating the performance of Blackdog's ancestor, as related by Pigaffetta in 1520, who did exactly the same thing, though with greater violence, when *he* first saw the looking-glass. Captain Smythe saw a man there whom he did not know. The morning before his disaster he had, in spite of foul weather, been as smooth-shaven and well-brushed an officer as any in Her Majesty's service. If that face in the glass were his, he was a wild man, with the complexion of a dark mulatto, and a tangled and dirty fall of hair over his collar. He recognised nothing of himself but his eyes, and they were wild and strange.

"I'll pray, and then I'll sleep," he said to the consul quietly; and for the first time for some months he found himself in a dreamless rest.

He was a different man on the morrow, and went about his business and his duties in his old form, and in his own manner. There was much to be done and seen to, but that was gone through within two days. Then he rested and watched the ships from the verandah of the consulate with a glass

Ships of all nations going out and in, and in three days not a single British arrival, which seemed strange, as the Argentines trade more with us than they do even with the United States. At last on the fourth day a screw steamer, schooner-rigged, came gliding up the river, with the dear old red flag flying, and a burgee at her mainmast head.

Captain Smythe stepped quickly down to the custom-house, where their boat was getting ready, and said to the officer, "I am anxious for news from England. Will you take me on board?"

There was no difficulty, he was well known, and away they went.

They were soon alongside of the beautiful craft, and the custom-house officer politely insisted on Captain Smythe's going on board first. He yielded, and swung himself up into the gangway, and stepped two paces over the deck, to be confronted by Captain Killick.

CHAPTER XXIV.

GENERAL SEPARATION.

"MY dear Killick, what on earth brings you here?" said Captain Smythe.

"I have come in my yacht to find you and bring you home; my voyage is ended, happily. Come into my cabin, and tell me all about it. Where's Clare?"

Such a look came into Captain Smythe's face as made Killick see that all was over there; he led him into the cabin, and they sat down to talk.

"When did he die?" asked Captain Killick.

Captain Smythe, at considerable length, told him the whole circumstances of the case; every one of which is in our reader's possession.

"It was very unfortunate," said Captain Killick, musingly, "very much so; but in one respect, don't you see? lucky for you."

"Why?"

"Because, don't you see? your duty was so entirely plain that you could not possibly do anything else but what you did; you must see *that*."

"But I did deliberate."

"I should not have thought you would," said Captain Killick; "but of course, it being Clare, your own son, you would be excused. You have done the finest thing you ever did in your life."

"That will not save me from ruin."

"I think it will; somewhat, at all events. There are some men at home now who are not your friends.—Well, to go into family matters, it seems of no use to go to your friend Blackdog after Clare."

"None whatever."

"Then I will get down to Santa Cruz, and open up communications with the Southern Tehuelches. I will take down a whole pile of trade from here and buy them over. We will get him, make sure of that.—What are you thanking me for, my dear old master? you can easily repay me."

"Never."

"I tell you you can. Do not throw any impediments in the way of my marrying Mabel."

"It would be the dearest wish of my heart, George, but I cannot force her inclinations, and she does not like you."

"She has discovered that she does, though, and never liked any one else. She has accepted me fully and entirely; it was that abominable Lady Southerey who made the mischief between us. I assure you that she has given me her love."

"God be thanked!—but was it conditional on your finding me?"

"Why no, that is the best of it; however, we must work first and play afterwards. Can you give me your own chart of the Gulf of St. Juan? for I shall put in there and see where the thing happened."

"I cannot give you that, my boy," said Captain Smythe, "but I can give you this one, which old Godfrey, poor fellow, gave me; he was in there in 1854, with the *Diophantes*, and died coming home; he left it to me among his other papers, as his executor. I found it and brought it out; you may have it."

"Thanks," said Captain Killick, folding it up, and putting it in his pocket. "Now I shall coal and sail."

"Heaven be with you," said Captain Smythe. "I want to tell you something now, while we are alone. I fear this court-martial terribly for one thing. I gave a wrong order. I said sou-sou-east, instead of sou-sou-west."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes; all my ship's company will swear it. *And, George, I had a reason for it, an overwhelming reason, but my head is gone with these troubles, and I can't think what it was.* Look at the chart on the table before us. I must have put the ship straight on the Dolphin rock."

They looked at the chart together, but not one ounce of comfort did they get from it.

"Where was Darrel?" said George Killick.

"On the bridge. He says that he would swear anything to save me, but that it would be of no use. Besides, when we talked over the matter, I am sure myself that I did so, and I must admit it at once.

"Well," said George Killick, "good times and bad times and all times get over. Give Mabel a kiss from

me, and tell her that she shall have Clare home if I can bring him."

Captain Smythe was as energetic as his young officer and future son-in-law; the *La Plata*, royal mail, was ready to sail just at the same time as Captain Killick's yacht. They steamed down the river together and separated, one to the north the other to the south. In a few days where were our characters? Smythe somewhere in the South Atlantic, Captain Killick running down the coast of Patagonia, Mrs. Smythe wearying in her miserable lodgings, and Clare, where was he? Last and not least, where, oh where were Lord Marcus D'Este and James Pritchard? Our people are scattered to the four winds of heaven at present; is it possible that they will ever meet save in that heaven from which all winds, whether foul or fair, are said to blow?

CHAPTER XXV.

THE ADVENTURES OF CLARE.

ON the morning when Clare was missing from the camp he had awakened very early, and he did not know at first what had awakened him, but turning over in his blanket he listened.

There was a puma close to the camp, that was evident —nay, there were more than one. That low, dull muttering came from both sides of the camp. He raised himself in a sitting posture, and looked round.

All were asleep except the sentry, and he, although upright on his legs, was comatose and had his back turned towards him. It struck Clare that to slip out of camp, to kill one of these cowardly cats, and to come back and tell his father, would be amusing. He rose from his father's side, and stepped among the sleeping men. Near the outside of them lay the boy Dickson—

a favourite of his. He thought of awakening him to join the fun, but he did not. There would have been one grave less in the desert if he had.

Clare passed away unobserved. Either the puma was further off than he at first supposed, or it was retreating before him. He had walked a long distance, and still had not come up to it. The grass was very high, up to his shoulders, with narrow bare lanes between the hillocks. It was a cloudy morning, and the puma had changed its direction very often. He was completely abroad as to his locality; so he turned, as he thought, to go back to camp.

At this moment the puma gave a snarl so near to him that it was evident that the beast was within range. He turned round, and there was the brown moving back within fifty yards. He had his bayonet fixed, he fired, and then followed up his shot to the encounter.

But there was no puma, only a guanaco skin on a stick, waved to and fro before him in derision in front of his empty rifle. He essayed to load again, but he was instantly pinioned from behind before he had the chance of making any resistance. He looked round and

saw that he was surrounded by ten or fifteen lank, dark, prominent-cheeked Indians, standing from six to nearly eight feet high. He knew that he was in the hands of the Patagonian savages, of whom he had read, and that he must die like an officer and a gentleman.

He discovered afterwards the ruse they had played. They had not dared to approach the sailors for fear of the rifles, but they wanted to catch one of them for the purpose of ransom. They saw them shooting singly, and they tried, by imitating the muttering of a puma, to lead one of them away. They succeeded beyond their hopes. Clare, one of the youngest of the party, was probably the only armed one who would have left his couch for the fun of shooting a worthless puma. The result of his escapade we have seen.

He was hurried swiftly along for nearly a mile until they came to a group of horses tied together and guarded by one giant. He was mounted and hurried off between two other Indians at a speed which, though not very high, was simply amazing to him when he compared the smallness of the horses (few over sixteen hands) and the gigantic size of their riders. No one

spoke a word, and Clare kept steady on his horse, seeing escape was impossible, for he and his two captors rode in front and the others brought up the rear. They kept looking back at first, but after a few miles eased their horses. They were afraid that the shot might have been heard at the camp, and that some pursuit would be attempted with those horrible guns which would kill, as they thought, at two miles.

The shot never was heard, and Captain Smythe only awoke to find his son gone from his side, whither he could not guess. It was only when he got among the Northern Tehuelches that he knew that Clare was among the Southern.

Whenever Clare caught the eye of either of his guides he smiled and nodded. The tallest seemed a sulky savage, but the short one (he was about six feet three inches) seemed, as Clare said afterwards, to be a good-humoured little fellow, and repeatedly grinned in response. They travelled some hours, in what direction Clare could not guess, for, as I have said before, the day was extremely cloudy. At noon, as his watch told him, they halted, turned their horses loose, and sat

down to eat and drink by a melancholy water hole in the plain. Clare was fed first with some ostrich meat, which he found good, and they brought him water *in a sailor's tin pannikin.* Could they have been near the wreck?

They talked very little among themselves, but stared pertinaciously at him while they gobbled their food in the most disgusting manner. It seemed to him that the sulkiest and tallest of his guardians had most authority among them, and he determined to propitiate him.

He went and sat down beside him, examining his dress and accoutrements familiarly. Then he took out his gold watch and looked at it. It was just noon, and Clare, taking out his pocket compass, pointed steadily to where the sun was. An exclamation of wonder and astonishment broke from the chief. That a boy should know where the sun was under that leaden, melancholy sky was amazing, and he said something which brought the others to their feet crowding round the young officer—and what a mite he looked among them all!

He pointed to the west, and with his hands high up described mountains; then pointing to the east, he put his hands down and described the sea. The astonishment of all was unbounded; he then made a sign for the chief to sit down, and sitting down beside him, took out his watch and put it to his ear.

The chief (Pashlickyank, *Anglicè* "Hungry Father") assumed a look of wonder, and then of fear. At last, after half a minute, he could stand it no longer; he burst into a wild howl, leapt to his feet, and addressed his tribe incoherently. Clare afterwards, from the continual repetition of one word (Winkioom) thought that he was explaining that the boy had a golden egg which was about to hatch. Clare got him to come to him again, and offered him the watch as a present; but the chief was far too wise to have anything so dangerous about him. He had seen a good deal of sorcery in his life; his own mother could raise the devil (and frequently did in more ways than one), and he did not like that sort of thing at all. In fact, Clare saw that he had done himself no good by the offer of his watch, as the chief evidently suspected him of designs on his per-

son.* He bethought himself of his pocket-knife, and offered the chief that; it was accepted.

The chief gave him a friendly pat upon the chest which made his sternum ache, though he never showed it. Pashlickyank had evidently a grand opinion of him now. Clare exhibited to him and to the others the wonders of his many-bladed clasp-knife, for which his poor mother had given two guineas at Weiss's. The cutting blades they understood; the saw he explained to them by sawing through a piece of wood, to their intense delight; the tweezers were also within their comprehension, after Clare had extracted a hair out of the chief's head; but the corkscrew was totally incomprehensible. In vain did Clare draw innumerable imaginary bottles for them, imitating the process admirably with his mouth. They only thought that the thing was of the devil, devilish, and that Clare was doing a dangerous trick in sorcery, the

* So far has civilization progressed since the times of which I am writing, that such of the Patagonians as have not drunk themselves to death, are perfectly aware of the use of a watch, and will relieve any traveller of one without the least fear of evil consequences.

results of which could not be foreseen; so they stopped him.

Poor wretches! they were not far wrong. Civilization has taught them now the use of a corkscrew, and they are a doomed race.

But the chief liked his knife, and thought much of Clare, putting him on his horse kindly, and riding beside him alone. They were two hours more before they came up with a large party of the tribe, who had been on a hunting excursion, and were in a temporary encampment in a rather beautiful valley, with a bright creek running through it. There were five of those large double tents made of skins, supported on a double row of bent poles, which Clare afterwards learnt to call toldos. There were many women and children, the women at their various employments, such as scraping guanaco skins, working ornaments for bridles and trappings, or cooking. They were all talking loudly, and Clare remarked that the younger women were, although tall and gaunt, handsome, while the old women were hideous; they, like the men, were painted with different coloured earths in various patterns. The children were

playing in imitation of the pursuits of their seniors, and the whole group seemed busy and happy.

He saw at once something which he kept to himself. The signal-box of the *Warhawk* had come into the possession of these people, for the women had bedizened themselves in the flags in every possible manner. Clare used to say afterwards that he "read off" Mrs. Pashlickyank as having sprung her fore-topmast; but this of course was his nonsense. There was another proof of their having been near the wreck, which affected Clare more acutely.

Swarming about the camp there were an infinity of dogs of all kinds and descriptions, who bayed round him as he dismounted, and were driven away by the surrounding Indians. One attracted his attention by sitting apart disconsolate, and as he looked at that dog he got wildly excited, and, pushing the Indians apart, he gave a shrill whistle.

The dog, a large mastiff-looking animal, leapt to its feet, and looked round in every direction. Clare whistled again, and called "Lion! Lion!" With five mighty bounds the dog was on his bosom, yelping in the mad-

ness of his joy; and Clare and he, covering one another with caresses, talked to one another in that hurried language known only to dogs and the lovers of dogs.

It was their own Lion: he had played with it when it was a puppy; it had slept beside his bed in his dear old home; it had been loved and caressed by his mother and his sisters; and here in this horrible, far-off place, among the staring savages, it was on his bosom once more, barking inarticulate phrases of undying affection, of hope, and of home.

He broke down utterly, little shame to him, and covered the dog's face with tearful kisses. The Indians wondered, and one said to the other—

"See, these English Christians can talk the language of their dogs, and their dogs theirs. Without doubt they are most wonderful sorcerers, and might drive all the guanacos and ostriches into the sea, from which they come by their spells."

"And they said at Santa Cruz," said another, "that they are governed by a witch, who sends thunder and lightning on a calm day, and has fiery iron horses."

"The White Americanos to the north can do that," said another, "but they cannot talk to their dogs."

While this discussion on foreign politics was going on, orders had been given to strike the toldos and march. The order was executed with a rapidity which astonished Clare, sailor as he was. He calculated that, at the rate they worked, they could have loaded a schooner of eighty tons in five hours: everything was in its place, as it ought to be on board a man-of-war, and so no time was lost. He had eaten and rested not a very long time, when the head of the cavalcade was ready to start. He rode nearly first between Pashlickyank and the shorter and more good-humoured chief, whose name he afterwards found to be Narenkysee (*Anglicè*, "Confound you," *or worse*), a name which must have been given on the principle of *lucus a non lucendo*, for he was the mildest of men, as far as Clare observed; still he was evidently put upon sometimes by his enemies; and if you could judge from the number of knife-wounds about such parts of his body as were exposed (nine-tenths), he was a desperate and sanguinary fighter when driven to it by a wicked world.

Riding on between these two somewhat dubious worthies, with Lion in close company, he at the first gentle rise saw the whole cavalcade winding along behind him. Horses ridden by men with no other burden; horses laden with all the household goods, with women and children on the top of them; loose horses driven in front, and a few following in the rear; and dogs innumerable both small and great.

They headed westward, up the creek, keeping to the bed of the valley, where there was tolerable travelling through open timber. The creek began to split off into others, and get smaller and smaller; it was obvious that they were bound for another water-shed.

That evening there was a grand palaver of the principal warriors, of which he evidently was the theme. They could not help turning to look at him now and then as he stood apart. No communication was made to him, however. He was suffered to do as he liked, but he was perpetually watched, both from policy and also from curiosity. He never had less than twenty pair of beady eyes watching every moment.

Next morning a most important party, apparently a

war party, started away north in their best finery. They were all fresh painted, and one of them had on the gaudy green-and-silver jacket of a guacho. Clare wondered what had become of the owner.

When they were gone, the big chief, Pashlickyank, who seemed to be Clare's principal owner or protector, ordered the rest to pack up and march, he and Clare riding away together, with an escort of four or five. The creek was almost gone now, and leaving its bank they passed through some almost dry gullies for three or four days, still going westward, and by noon of the fourth day ascended to the summit of the steppe, which stretched away like the sea. Clare looked to the west, expecting to see one of those vast terraces which, running from north to south, cut through Patagonia from end to end—the old levels of the now receded ocean. There was none to be seen in that direction; they must be on the summit level of the steppe, and now he remarked that they seemed close to the Andes, here scarcely five thousand feet above the sea level. Far to the north he could see in the extreme distance two white peaks of much greater elevation. "Those will be Melimoya and

Yanteles," he thought. "Melimoya and Yanteles," he repeated aloud. "Ah! if I were fifty miles the other side of *you* I would give up every pleasure until I had saved enough money to buy a life-boat and present it to the Association."

The thought was fearfully tantalizing, and his heart utterly sank within him. He wished that he had known less of geography or that he had not seen the peaks.

They camped on the plateau at a place where there was water, and hunting parties were organised every day, in which Clare took part as a spectator under *surveillance*. He was at once amazed and interested.

These people had firearms and ammunition, but they were of a miserable pattern, and they were rarely used. Things are somewhat different now; the Patagonians have rifles of a better sort and revolvers; but they stick to the bolas and the lasso still for hunting purposes. The bolas of all three sorts require an immensity of practice before they can be used. The three-balled one is the most in use for guanaco, the two-balled for ostrich. Three heavy balls, of bright metal preferred, are slung on three plaited hide ropes about eight feet long, joined

at the ends furthest from the balls. The whole arrangement is swung round the head while the rider is at full gallop, and hurled at the quarry, sometimes at a distance of seventy yards. If it misses, the rider has another set ready, and makes another cast, returning at his leisure to pick up the first. If it hits, the three cords, by the centrifugal motion of the heavy balls, are curled with deadly force round the neck of the animal, bringing it down as certainly as a rifle bullet. The lasso, so familiar to every schoolboy, is used for catching horses, and also for pumas, though the general way of killing the latter is by the bola, with which a dexterous Indian can beat in the skull.

The reason for giving these details will be apparent immediately. None of the arms of the Patagonians, with the exception of the sword (which was seldom thought of) or the spear (which was never used, save on foot), could be depended on at close quarters.

Clare was astonished once more during these hunting parties, as his father had been, at the way in which the proportionally small horses scrambled over the ground with their gigantic burdens. He was allowed the pick

of horses, and he selected a very beautiful mare, whose shoulder went backward until her saddle had to be placed nearly on her rump like a donkey's, whose ribs went back as round as a cow's until they nearly met her pelvis, and whose tail stuck off her body for a foot so stiff that you might have hung your hat on it. Everything on that mare sloped *backwards*, except her ears and head. Her quarters were enormous, and her hind legs, when she was standing still, came so far forward that they were nearly under her girth. She was in colour chestnut, and in temper angelic.

The latter quality was most fortunate, for Clare turned out to be a remarkably maladroit horseman, always coming to grief when it was possible, and sometimes when it seemed impossible. This was singular, because at home he was considered to be a consummate horseman. Possibly it was the strangeness of the saddle, or the loss of nerve in consequence of his troubles. The fact, however, remained the same; this wonderful young Englishman could not ride a bit.

Now an incident occurred which altered Clare's position in a remarkable manner.

Four or five of them were out hunting together, Clare with them, on his mare, accompanied by Lion, who never left him now. An Indian, a young man of whom Clare had got very fond, had thrown a guanaco with the three-balled bola, and having dismounted, was running in to secure it, leaving his horse standing, in the way in which Indian horses only will stand. Only Clare and one other of the party were at hand, when the young Indian was stopped half-way between his horse and his quarry, by a gigantic puma, which with grinning fangs looked round on the group, as though to say, "Let me see the man who will touch *my* guanaco."

It was a most unusual occurrence, for the puma generally flees from the face of man. There, however, was the puma, showing fight, within one bound of the young Indian.

Heaven save us from our friends! Pashlickyank, who was beside Clare, sent a *bola perdita* (a single bola with a pointed end) flying past the young Indian's head, but only succeeded in hitting the puma a violent dig in the ribs, instead of smashing its skull. The effect of this was alike unexpected and instantaneous: the long,

lithe, shambling brute gathered itself together like a mass of ribbed steel, and hurled itself on Clare's friend, with its teeth in his shoulder, and its four sets of claws deep in his sides and legs. Any European would have been borne down by the shock, but the weight and size of the Patagonian stood him in good stead. Without a cry, without a groan in his deadly agony, he twisted the thong of a bola perdita which he had in his hand round the puma's neck, and forcing his hand in like a tourniquet, drew it tight.

Pashlickyank dared not throw his bolas, for the man and beast were locked together in the embrace of death. Suddenly his cutlass was snatched from his side, and he saw Clare running to the rescue with it in his hands.

That was a well-placed thrust, just below the beast's third rib into the heart. The brute turned its yellow eye on Clare in deadly anger, but the eye grew wild, lost its sight, and then closed: it was dead, and its hold on the Indian was partly relaxed as the head hung heavily down.

The death had been so sudden, that the animal, nearly as large as a lioness, was with difficulty separated from

the living man. Lacerated as he was, he held out his hand to Clare, and Clare saw that he had made a friend.

He had made many, but now they were kinder to him than ever. Pashlickyank had a long conversation with him by signs, in which he frequently made the motion of shooting with a gun. As is usual when people communicate with one another by signs (save on the stage), neither of them had the remotest notion what the other meant. At last Pashlickyank, with pity at Clare's stupidity, had his rifle and cartridge-pouch brought, and plainly asked him if he would like them. How Clare answered "RATHER" in capital letters by signs, I have no idea, but he did so; and to his intense delight found himself in possession of his arms once more.

A few days afterwards they went hunting, and having fired off his rifle he loaded it again, and was ready for anything. The first game they came on was a rhea, which allowed them to approach within 200 yards. Clare stopped them at that distance. He was extremely nervous in one way, but cool in another. He fired; the bird made a short run, and fell on its breast on the grass dead. As no gun which they had was of any use over

thirty yards, and not much then, this was looked upon as nearly miraculous.

Time did not go unpleasantly for a fortnight; he hunted every day with them, but made them understand that ammunition was scarce, and could only be used in case of danger. With the vivacity of his age, his nation, and profession, he really enjoyed himself in seeing them hunt, but at the end of the fortnight something happened which extremely disturbed the equanimity of his host or rather captors. The supposed war-party returned, evidently quite unsuccessful; they had not been beaten in battle, for none of them were wounded or missing; they had not been unsuccessful in the chase, for they brought plenty of game with them; but their looks were exceedingly sour, and so close an observer as Clare was could not fail to see that he was the cause of their discontent, for they looked at him, not with anger, but with a feeling of disappointment. He could not make it out.

We, however, can tell our readers what was the matter. They had gone off to treat with Captain Smythe about his release. They had been splendidly paid some

years before for taking care of some missionaries, and they would have been glad to make such another bargain. Conceive their utter disappointment at finding that Captain Smythe had passed north into the country of their (just now) implacable enemy, Blackdog.

Clare thinks that they took this resolution: to make peace with Blackdog and share the ransom money. Certain it is that they all moved north-westward next day, and the day after, until the peaks of Melimoya and Yanteles seemed provokingly close.

Of course he could not know the reason, but he saw that he was watched more closely than before. Although he was allowed to go hunting and carry his rifle there were always six or seven of them close to him. Of course he said to himself that it did not matter, but he began to get feverish and ill, and desired to be alone. He did not know what to do, and he could not make up his own mind. Such another time of suspense, he has said, would put ten years on his life.

He spared the pretty mare which they had given him as much as possible, and took less and less interest in the hunting. His lips were always dry, and his eyes

got that strange haggard look of those who always watch.

The morning came for which he had prayed for so many days. He and four others were out on the steppe, nearer the mountains than they had ever been before; they were beating about for anything they could find, but were in bad ground, the grass being short, giving no cover for anything. He was sitting listlessly in his saddle with his rifle slung round him, Lion being in close attendance, and he observed that, of the four, only one man was between him and the mountains, the gentle chief Narenkysee, and he, Clare, two hundred yards north of a certain line.

Now was the time, or never; he breathed a short prayer, got his horse by the head, let the spurs into her, and sped away due westward like an arrow from a bow.

A shout from the two men behind him aroused Narenkysee who was only two hundred yards off his course; he tried to intercept him diagonally, but Clare passed him like the wind a hundred yards off. The bolas flew from the Indian's hand but fell short.

"Three more bounds, little mustang!" he cried in his agony, "and we are safe. O God of my fathers, do not desert me now!"

One, two, three, four, five seconds. Then he dared to turn his head. They were toiling after him, but of course hopelessly. He had selected the best horse they had, and was riding nine stone five, the lightest of them, on an inferior or over-worked horse, was riding nineteen stone. He distanced them as though they were standing still. In half-an-hour looking back he saw that all three had stopped, dead beaten, and that one of them had dismounted.

"Fifty miles to-day, my darling, and we are free. God speed us!"

The pretty creature went like a swallow, and Lion careered with glad bark before him. He eased his mare three or four times, and in two hours pulled her up at the edge of a great forest. Then before entering he turned round and took his last view for ever of the melancholy steppes of Patagonia.

CHAPTER XXVI.

ACROSS THE ANDES.

WE must still follow Clare, and allow Captain Killick, nay, Lord Marcus D'Este—as important a person as any—to await their time, which will be by no means long. When we come to them we shall have a great moral—to wit, that no man ought to sail a ship unless he knows how, which is a very innocent one.

Clare passed into the forest, and found it open, so he pushed on another ten miles, calculating that he had made a splendid distance since his escape. He found a little dell in the pine woods, with a trickling stream, and plenty of good feed for his horse. He rode his horse *in the water* nearly two miles to the right, or north, and then he camped, hobbled the mare, and turned her out. When she had had a good feed he mounted again, and went on ten miles further in a north-west

direction. He met another little stream coming from the west, in small cascades over rocks, and here he determined to rest for some hours, in fact during the greater part of the night.

He had no intention of going to sleep, but he wanted to rest his horse, for he knew that there was rough work before him. He argued thus. "I have a start of nine hours practically, and it will take those noodles at least four more to recover my trail up the creek. A Canadian Indian would do it in twenty minutes. Some good may come to me from having read Fenimore Cooper's novels. I am glad my friends are more ignorant than myself.

"Now let me be logical. Where there is the highest elevation, there is frequently the greatest depression,—not always, I grant you, but I have not watched these mountains for nothing; there is a dip south of the two high peaks, and I have to get through it. Let us see what to-morrow will bring forth."

He walked up and down while his horse fed: evening darkened into night, but the night was not so dark but that he could see his compass or his watch. He had remembered something which gave him great confidence

against pursuit, and that was that he had somewhere read that the Patagonians will not move by night, in consequence of the almost innumerable number of free devils which haunt that country and lead them a terrible life. It was probably some old child's edition of Pigafetta which he called to mind. Clare was not in the least degree afraid of the devils, and so was comfortable for a time.

But there are worse things than imaginary devils—here is a horse in the darkness, worse than Setebos and his whole family. A rustling in some brushwood a hundred yards off, and a sniff, sniff, as of some one smelling, Lion growling uneasily, with now and then a whine. His horse was in the middle of an open space in the wood, and he was between the horse and the noise which he heard. He knew what made that noise well enough; it was a puma. In one instant the beast's fangs might be in his horse's shoulder, and he ruined.

He took his resolution quickly. He had his loaded rifle in his hand, and they had left him the bayonet (without which he had explained to his captors the rifle would not go off). The next time that the puma

moved he flourished his rifle in the air, and, howling like ten lunatics, he rushed towards it, making night hideous with his noise, and Lion, with his tail between his legs, helping as well as he could. There was a horrible growl and a snarl, but Clare held right on screeching; the brute could not stand it, and Clare heard it bounding away through the forest, crashing the fallen timber right and left in its headlong course of terror.

Still, it was not a good place to remain in. Instead of going to sleep, he spent some hours in cutting up a bullet into very small pieces, with a little knife which he had reserved for his nails. He would have given something for his old clasp-knife now; but what between pounding the bullet between two stones and cutting it, he produced a tidy charge of shot; then he took something to eat out of the little store he had brought with him hunting, and went on.

He was still travelling when the morning dawned, and he came out on a bald ridge, leaving the stream behind him going eastward. The ground kept rising all day, and the peak of Melimoya seemed strangely near him on

the right. He found some water and plenty of grass and, calculating that he had done forty miles, he lay down to sleep in an open space among brushwood, the name of which he did not know.

Another day still rising; it began to grow deadly cold, and he felt that he was at a considerable height; still there was no sign of any failure in vegetation; his food had failed, but he had seen many animals which he mistook for hares. Coming over a little ridge he saw before him a covey of birds in the grass. He fired his cut up bullet among them and killed three. When he picked them up he found that they were a sort of grouse.

He had met no snow as yet, or any signs of it, though the south shoulder of Melimoya seemed close to him on the right, like a collection of brilliant white crystals. A lofty down was before him, smooth and flat at the top, which blocked out the westering sun. He pushed his brave mare up it, and in two hours stood upon the summit, looking around him.

His first feeling was that of incredulity, his second of awe. He was sailor enough to know where he was.

He was on the watershed of the Andes, where no human foot had stood before. To the right towered Melimoya, blocking out Yanteles, to the left were the fast subsiding peaks of the Corderilla dipping towards Terra del Fuego; before him were innumerable pine-clad glens from the furthest point of which, where they all met, issued a great river, and beyond all, in the west lay the mighty Pacific.

Let us be just to him—the first thing he did was to offer up a short and earnest thanksgiving; that was well. Then he put his horse down the hill at a rather dangerous pace, and halted where the first willows began to show by a little spring.

"Do you know where we are, my lass?" he said to his mare as he took her bridle off. "We are in Christian land. God save the Republic of Chili! God save Dundonald! Lion, my lad, do you hear, we are in a Christian country?"

As he cooked his grouse, and sat beside his fire, he kept saying to himself, "I will make along the coast to Valdivia. I wonder where I shall find the first ranche."

CHAPTER XXVII.

CAPTAIN KILLICK MEETS PASHLICKYAUK.

CAPTAIN KILLICK, with everything to make success possible,—coals, interpreters, provisions, looking-glasses, and beads for trade,—made at first a complete failure, which we will shortly describe.

He had the best of weather, though it was a little adverse; he got to the Gulf of St. Juan in eight days. He very carefully surveyed this gulf from one end to the other in a way which extremely puzzled his crew. Nothing seemed to satisfy the men. They were taken from one end to the other of it for several days. The lead was eternally going, the boats were always out, and Captain Killick was making observations night and day as if he was the captain of the *Beagle* or the *Rattlesnake*.

A boat came upon the wreck of the *Warhawk*, and

the sailor steering that boat reported to him that he had found it. Captain Killick was petulant. "Do you suppose I did not know where *that* was?" he said, and went to his cabin, where they saw him shortly afterwards deep again in his chart.

At length he seemed perfectly satisfied, and his old self again; he went to the wreck, and saw it. The brave old ship had little to show except a few of her ribs, yet she had been a dear home to him once when he was a boy, and his men saw that he felt the sight of her keenly.

Then he steamed away southward, and in rather a high latitude, but much short of Santa Cruz, he discovered a river. He went up that river in a boat for a little distance. Seeing signs of life in a cove, they carefully landed out of sight, and with loaded rifles successfully surrounded an old woman who was eating cockles. As she took not the slightest notice of them in any way, but went on eating her cockles, they did not exactly know what to do, and Captain Killick called a council of war.

His boatswain suggested a piece of striped calico,

This was offered her. She immediately snatched it away, sat down upon it, and went on with her repast.

"What is to be done now?" asked Killick. "However, she can't go on eating for ever, the abominable old hag."

He would have been more interested in her, possibly, had he known that she was our friend Pashlickyauk's mamma, and the most famous sorcerer in all Patagonia with the exception of Blackdog's mamma, who knew a trick or two more than she did.

When the old lady had done her dinner, she rose, she was about six foot five, and howled in a foreign language to a neighbouring hill; her bellow was answered from the heights, and she sat down again. The interpreter, a sharp, though peculiarly disreputable, young Argentine sailor, did not catch what she said. He found it necessary to approach her with fire-water. Captain Killick had the strongest objection to doing this, and was resolute that she should not have too much. The interpreter offered the old lady a glass of spirits; she smelt it, threw it in the interpreter's face and the glass after it.

But it opened a conversation. She said to him, "You dogs of whites bring nothing but poison here."

"True, mother," said the interpreter; "why do your men drink our poison?"

"Because they are not all as I am; because we are dying out and have not the courage of our forefathers. What are you come here for now?"

"The English people have lost a boy."

"I have lost many."

"Would you not have them back?"

"Yes. Well, your boy is up the country with my son Pashlickyauk. I have told them to let him know that you are here. I am here, as the wisest woman in the tribe to watch and see if any white people came for him. Pashlickyauk will be here in five days; the chasquis are galloping after him now. Pashlickyauk will save him if he can; my son is kind. But the devil Narenkysee will kill him and eat his liver. Let me alone."

They were obliged to do so and take her word. One by one the Indians dropped in, and there was soon a considerable number of them, whom Captain Killick

propitiated in every way through the interpreter, while he attended the arrival of Pashlickyauk.

He was as good as his word, riding straight up to Captain Killick's camp, and dismounting very hurriedly He put a paper into the captain's hands without a word. Clare had had the thoughtfulness to leave it with the young warrior whose life he had saved, making him believe that it would stand the tribe in good stead in case of his death. Now both Pashlickyauk and this young warrior had trusted and liked Clare, and had persistently refused, as it afterwards turned out, to have him murdered and got rid of—the persistently urged scheme of the gentle Narenkysee, who had given him his parting benediction with a pair of bolas. Clare being gone, and news having afterwards come that the English were after him, the young warrior put this paper in Pashlickyauk's hands, and he wisely used it, trusting Clare's word as to its contents.

It was written in pencil, on a carefully folded leaf of his note-book, and ran thus :—

"I am Clare Smythe, late midshipman of H.M.S. *Warhawk*, wrecked in the Gulf of St. Juan. I have been

captured by these people, from whom I have received nothing but extreme kindness, they having treated me more like a brother than a captive. If this paper should fall into the hands of any white man I pray him to reward these people according to his means, or communicate with my father.

"But I have become such a favourite with these savages that I fear they will detain me. From where I am I can see two high peaks, which I take to be Melimoya and Yanteles, though I dare not ask these people for fear of exciting their suspicions. My plan is, then, to watch night and day for an opportunity, and then ride hard westward to the south of them and try to get into Chilian territory; my ultimate destination of course will be Valdivia or Chiloe. I am splendidly mounted, and if I can get a start, can outpace them by my lighter weight two lengths to one."

Captain Killick looked at Pashlickyauk with a blank stare of inquiry. "Ask him where he is now," he said to the interpreter.

Pashlickyauk told a story to the interpreter with great excitement and gesticulation; it was the story of Clare's

escape. When Captain Killick heard it from the interpreter he gave a cheer, threw his cap in the air, and with a flushed face cried out, "Well done, my gallant little brother."

Pashlickyauk explained that he had made himself a general favourite; he told the story of the puma, and gave a long account of Clare's proceedings. He said how sorry they were to lose him, and how they merely meant to hold him to ransom. He said that one of the warriors had thrown the bolas at him when he escaped, for which he had been beaten and degraded.

About this last assertion Captain Killick believed as much as he chose. The tribe were rewarded beyond their utmost hopes, and the yacht sailed away south, and in nine days was at the mouth of the Straits of Magellan.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A FRIEND IN DIFFICULTIES.

THERE were a few ships at the mouth of the strait, but the wind was rather heavy from the west, and they were at anchor in Pine Harbour. Killick, however, determined to push through and use up his coals. So steam being got up, he was soon sliding on between the great mountain walls not uncomfortably.

A great American paddle-wheeled steamer came thundering towards him from the Pacific side, when he was half-way through the straits; to his great astonishment she stopped and hailed him; and the two ships drew up alongside, the *Snake*, Captain Killick's yacht, looking very small alongside of the St. Francisco steamer.

"I see you carry a burgee, sir," said the American from his paddle-box; "there is another English yacht in Cascade Harbour, which has come to grief, and as you

are not pressed for time I thought you might like to hail her. I sent a spare spar on board, but could not wait, as she is in no danger except that of staying there for a few months."

Captain Killick expressed his deep obligation, and steamed away for the spot,—a deep bay, with the snowy mountains looking down upon it from behind the pine-trees, which clambered 1,500 feet up the rugged side of the glens. The landscape strongly reminded him of Mount Ida, as described in Tennyson's "Œnone." In the bright summer sunshine of that time of year, December, the scene was one of amazing beauty.

> "Behind the valley topmost Gargarus
> Stands up and takes the morning."

Here too was

> "The long brook falling through the clov'n ravine,
> In cataract after cataract to the sea."

Terra del Fuego, however, is not a paradise, particularly in the winter.

They soon made out the yacht, a handsome steamer of about 380 tons, with the union-jack flying upside down

on the flagstaff at the stern. She was dismasted, and her bowsprit was gone; the crew seemed busy in getting up a jury-mast. "You have not much chance of getting out of it with *that* stick and a crew of fair-weather hands," said Killick to himself. "I must see after you, though I am in a hurry. However, I never failed another sailor yet; and as for Clare, he is either safe at Valdivia or dead; a few hours will not matter in any way." He was soon alongside the yacht, out of his boat, and on her deck; he was met by two wild-looking weather-beaten men with long tangled beards and hair, one of whom was much taller than the other. Captain Killick was the first to speak.

"I am Captain Killick, of Her Majesty's service; that is my private yacht; I am only too happy to assist the flag in any way in my private capacity. What can I do for you?"

"I really am afraid nothing," said the taller of the two men; "in addition to the ruin you see about you I have broken my screw-shaft, and am leaking worse every hour. If you would go over the ship with my sailing-master here, and give us the benefit of your experience, you would be conferring a very great

favour; the fact of the matter is that he sprained his ankle and was laid up, during which time, instead of putting back to Buenos Ayres, I insisted on sailing her myself; you see the result," he added, pointing round.

"Well, well, sir," said Killick good-humouredly; "we must all live and learn. Let us look around."

The tall man went into his cabin. Captain Killick and the sailing-master went over the vessel from stem to stern. There were fourteen men on board, most of whom were splendid-looking sailors, like Englishmen, but who spoke to one another in a language which he did not understand, and four out of these were relieving one another continually at the pumps. Captain Killick returned to the cabin with a very long face.

"My dear sir," he said, "I am very sorry to say that all I can do is to advise you to abandon your ship. The case is perfectly hopeless; even if we got a sail under her she could not possibly float in the Atlantic; I am afraid I can give no other advice."

"I have been prepared for this," said the owner. "I almost regret that I had not taken passage in that Yankee steamer, but she was going the wrong way; I wanted

to go to Chiloe. I had better land my stores and wait to be picked up."

"Are your stores very valuable?"

"No; there will be enough for a week or two; we have been so long at sea that we are pretty low."

"Then of course your duty is easy. Put such stores as you wish to keep on board me, and ship your men with me: I am going to the very place you mention; or I can take you on to Valdivia or Valparaiso."

"You are more than generous," said the owner; "I can never thank you enough. I wish I could make you some amends."

"Why, what in the name of confusion else could I have done? A Queen's sailor is bound to help any ship in distress of any nation, leave alone a countryman. You confess yourself a landsman by such a speech."

"And by my handiwork," said the owner, looking round dolefully, and laughing.

In four hours everything possible was transferred from one vessel to the other; the last man was on board the *Snake*, and the other yacht was deserted. The two owners stood side by side on the deck.

"Shall I cut her cables, and let her go on shore?" said Captain Killick; "or shall she sink where she is?"

"What you will, Captain Killick," said the tall man, with something like a burst of emotion, "only do not let me see it. Poor little thing! I was so fond of her, and she carried me so well. I will go into your cabin until all is over."

"She is going to settle her own account with the sea, sir," said a quiet voice behind Killick, when the owner had retreated.

It was true; they had neglected the pumps for four hours, while they were clearing out, but had not noticed how deep she was getting: the end was evidently approaching now, for she was settling down by the head fast. The sailors of both crews clustered on the *Snake's* bulworks in silence, for the destruction of what has been your home, whether by fire, water, or metropolitan improvements, is a saddening sight. The end of the ship was very quiet; she was in smooth water, and went silently underneath it, bow foremost, without any disturbance except the bursting up of the deck: all that remained of her in two minutes after was a creamy line of

foam, with a few floating spars spinning round and round; and this, too, soon passed away from the face of the waters, and all was still.

Attention to the shipwrecked is the first instinct of a sailor: the men were royally cared for, and Killick hastened to see after his guest. He was cheerful enough now that it was all over, and when he had been trimmed by the ship's barber, had washed himself, and changed his clothes in the cabin which Killick had given him, you would hardly have known him—the wild man had turned into as fine-looking a gentleman as any in Europe.

There was an excellent dinner, which they had alone, the sailing-master messing alone in the steward's cabin. The evening was so rarely beautiful that they had their wine on the quarter-deck, while the ship throbbed patiently on through the strait, with an almost unexampled landscape shifting at every turn. The pine woods came down to the *blue water* (blue water means forty fathoms), and climbed the ridges of the mountains, until they dwindled away into the interminable sheets of chocolate-coloured peat; above were the snow crystals, starting out fantastically against the blue sky; through every glen

tumbled a cataract, and the whole scene, as Killick remarked, was a combination of Scotland and Italy.

"And yet," said the stranger, "we are in one of the most terrible parts of the world. In winter Magellan's Straits have a bad name.

"And they deserve it," said Killick. "Let us smoke our cigars and talk. Are you comfortable?"

"I don't think I ever was quite so comfortable in my life," said the other. "Now I will begin the conversation. Whither are you bound?"

Captain Killick, with intervals during which he superintended the man at the helm for a few moments, told him everything of which the reader is in possession; for there was a frank *bonhomie* about his guest which invited confidence, and Mabel was a theme on which he gladly enlarged with a gentleman.

His guest was immensely interested. "I have met Miss Smythe in society," he said thoughtfully. "That must be a fine boy that brother-in-law of yours—leastways, he is not your brother-in-law yet. But he will get through. If we don't find him at Chiloe or Valdivia, we must make a search for him. As for money, I have

plenty of that; as for men, my men will go anywhere for me. We will have him, as sure as you are born."

"My dear sir," said Killick, "you speak about your men. What language is that which they speak?"

"No worse than their native Irish," said his guest, apparently puzzled.

"There is another detail," said Killick: "I have never, curiously enough, asked your name, but I have heard (or fancied so) your sailing-master call you 'my lord' once or twice."

"Surely," said his guest; "I am Lord Marcus D'Este."

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE MYSTERY OF THE CHART.

IT was indeed our eccentric old friend; and his sailing master, who now having finished his dinner in the steward's cabin, was smoking the worst tobacco, was James Pritchard and no other person in the world. We will follow the conversation between Lord Marcus D'Este and Captain Killick.

"So you are Lord Marcus D'Este," said Captain Killick. "I have heard a great deal about you and your way of going to the uttermost ends of the earth You ought to be half a sailor by now."

"Just what I am," said Lord Marcus, "half a sailor with the best half wanting."

"May I ask, Lord Marcus, what you were doing in the Straits of Magellan?"

"Faith, then, I was going to Melbourne. You

answer that it was not the right way. That is what Father Whelan said to Tim Corrigan's sow when he found her in church on Easter morning, and she said that she was going home. 'But it's not the right way,' said his reverence. 'May be not,' said the pig, 'but I was making an experiment for the advancement of human knowledge.' That was the case with me."

"But, Lord Marcus," said Killick, very much inclined to laugh, "no one ever beats to the westward to get to Australia if they can help it."

"There was Magellan, and Anson, and Byron, and the California traders," said Lord Marcus. "It's a pity that Captain Byron couldn't write as well as his nephew. I thought I'd make the experiment against the westerly wind, and I have failed. I have added to human knowledge."

Captain Killick had it on the tip of his tongue to tell him that he had done nothing of the kind, but paused because the Irishman was so good-humoured and gentle under his disappointment. He felt that he would have been morose and sulky under such a misfortune, and he put the lesson to heart.

"Why did you not go by the Cape, Lord Marcus?" he asked.

"Everybody goes by the Cape," said Lord Marcus, "and I have been to the Cape before, and Cape Town is enough to make a man hang himself. I wanted to see some new country, that is all."

"You were in no hurry to reach Melbourne, then?"

"No."

That was all he said, and there was a long pause. Killick would not speak because he wanted Lord Marcus to do so. The sudden "No" showed him that Lord Marcus had a purpose which he did not choose to explain, and he was too much of a gentleman to "fish" for it.

The night grew chill, and Lord Marcus asked leave to retire. Captain Killick would not leave his deck until they were out of the Straits into the Pacific. They felt the first long roller heave about half-past four, and the ship began to creak. Captain Killick, going into his cabin, saw a light in that of Lord Marcus, and he looked in. The creaking of the ship made his entrance inaudible.

Lord Marcus was bending over a chart—a curious-looking chart—which he saw at once had been enlarged by photography. It was a chart of some islands which he did not at first recognize. There were a few very large letters on the chart which he could not help reading as he stood in the door. They were on the north of the map—

"T M A N"

Here the chart ended, and below—

"L H O"

Here the chart ended again.

He stood in the door and called out, "Lord Marcus, my dear friend, don't set the ship on fire." Lord Marcus, who was in his shirt, looked calmly round, blew out the light, and got into bed, apparently taking his chart to bed with him, for Killick never saw any more of it. Lord Marcus said in the darkness, "After hours, I know; nothing like discipline. Good-night, and God bless you."

Killick went to his bed puzzled. He had seen enough to stimulate his curiosity. The big letters, printed above, combined with the glimpse of the islands, were

quite enough to tell him, whose eye had been accustomed to every chart since he had been thirteen, the locality which Lord Marcus had been studying. He turned in, saying to himself, "What on earth can that mad Irishman want *there?*" Can you puzzle the place out for yourselves from the capitals given above? Try.

CHAPTER XXX.

VALDIVIA.

THEY had an extremely pleasant voyage; the Pacific was worthy of its name, and on deck evening after evening Lord Marcus and Captain Killick talked very much together. Killick had a prejudice against noblemen and against Irishmen, but he quite overcame the two prejudices when he found them united in the person of honest Lord Marcus D'Este.

One person sometimes came on the quarter-deck by invitation; it was James Pritchard. He from the first had recognized Captain Killick, and was afraid of being recognized himself. He might as well have put such an idea away at once, for his own mother would not have known him. He grew more and more at his ease, and Killick found him to be a good sailor and a very nice companion. But he only asked him to dine in the cabin

twice in the week, which they spent in coasting up Chili to Chiloe, under sail.

No roving Englishman had been heard of there, except a young man who had been accidentally left on shore, that is to say had run his ship and found himself bound. This young man asked for a passage, which accommodation Captain Killick politely denied; saying that if he had to pick up every deserting scoundrel on that coast he should require a fleet.

Captain Killick, from his habit of watching ship's crews, and trying to find out what they wanted, and moreover of trying to supply their wants, had got to watch everything; so he could not help seeing that Lord Marcus and his sailing-master were very much together in secret; and that on more than one occasion the sailing-master and Lord Marcus were in the latter's cabin together with the door bolted for an hour or more together. It puzzled him extremely.

But from Lord Marcus's manner he felt sure that sooner or later he would know the truth. Twenty times Lord Marcus had been on the verge of saying something to him, and had stopped. They had been frank

to one another, like English gentlemen, had discussed their past history and their future prospects, and yet—yet there was something which Lord Marcus kept back—something of which he was afraid to speak; and the sailing-master knew it.

The Captain was determined to give him a chance the night before they arrived at Valdivia. When they were alone on deck together Captain Killick said—

"Lord Marcus, I have made a friend of you, and we have one another's confidence in all points but one. There is something which you would like to tell me, but dare not.

"That is exactly the state of the case," said Lord Marcus quite coolly.

"Your sailing-master knows it?"

"Yes."

"And you will not tell me?"

"Why, there you have me," said Lord Marcus. "You are the very man I should like to tell. Now look here, my dear fellow," he continued, putting his hands on Killick's shoulders, "we are here to find this boy; that is the first thing; after we

have succeeded or failed in that, why then talk to me again."

"Then there is a mystery?"

"Yes."

"Hontman's Abrothos?" said Captain Killick.

"You are warm," said Lord Marcus; "but you might for practical purposes have as well said Greenwich Park."

Nothing more passed between them. They made Valdivia in the evening, showing their flag; it was too late to go on, and they cast anchor in the roads, intending to pass into the harbour at daybreak. The night was very clear, and Captain Killick and Lord Marcus walked up and down the deck smoking until every light in the pretty town had died out, save that which shone from the windows of the great cathedral, and warned them that the midnight mass of a great festival was being celebrated. It was time to turn in.

"We are in Christian waters again, at all events," said Captain Killick, as he and Lord Marcus separated at their cabin doors.

Lord Marcus, as an Orangeman, doubted that; and so they parted.

Captain Killick had not been to sleep an hour when his shoulder was shaken by his boatswain. He was a man who never swore; had he been, he would have sworn now; he merely sat up and asked what was the matter.

"Boat alongside, sir. Men want to come on board."

"These are your Chilian customs," he said ironically. "Tell the custom-house officers to come on board and take any liberty they like." He then roughly dressed himself and went on deck; two or three sailors came round with lanthorns; one person from the shore was already on board, but Captain Killick could not see him clearly.

The person spoke. "Sir, I saw your flag, and I came off in a whale-boat with some Indians and my dog I am an officer in her Majesty's navy—and——"

"Hold up those lanthorns," said Killick quietly.

They held them up as he directed, and they shone on the merry face of Clare Smythe.

CHAPTER XXXI.

TOWARDS THE QUEST.

CAPTAIN KILLICK had got Clare, which was the main object of his voyage; he had also got Clare's dog Lion, who had been put on board by some process only known to dogs and sailors, and who was hunting a loose chicken, with the cook in hot pursuit. The thing ended like a circus race: they all won. The dog caught the chicken and the cook caught the dog. Then Captain Killick retired into his cabin and wrote a letter to London saying that Clare was safe; then he went over the side, his boatswain carrying the lanthorn, and paid the crew handsomely, giving the coxswain the letter to post at Valdivia. Then he went on board again; and the crew of the whale-boat, by a process only known to themselves, upset the whale-boat, and fought in the water with knives for Captain Killick's

money. But of this Captain Killick never knew anything.

When he came into his saloon again Clare was talking eagerly to Lord Marcus. He at once stopped the conversation and ordered supper, saying, "Our boy must tell us all about it to-morrow morning." But Clare was not to be put off in this way. He put them in possession of all his adventures after he had passed the Chilian frontier, which were few. He had gone from ranche to ranche without any difficulty, and so had come to Valdivia, dog and all.

He had not half finished his adventures when they felt the screw throbbing, and Lord Marcus said,

"Are you going into harbour to night?"

"No," said Captain Killick coolly; "I am on my route for Valparaiso. Clare, boy, go to bed, and we will hear the rest to-morrow morning."

Clare obeyed, not unwillingly. Lord Marcus and Captain Killick remained alone in the cabin.

"I have written," said Captain Killick, "home from Valdivia, to say that I have got the boy Clare. Now I shall go to Valparaiso, and then——"

"What will you do then?" said Lord Marcus.

"I do not know."

"I have made up my mind to speak to you," said Lord Marcus. "Draw nearer to me. Can anyone hear us?"

"Not a soul," said Captain Killick.

There ensued a long and eager conversation, carried on almost entirely by Lord Marcus, during which Killick's face assumed a variety of expressions. At one time he seemed doubtful, at another confident; but at last he said, "This sailing-master of yours is in your confidence. Let us have him down."

Lord Marcus stepped to the door of the cabin and called for Mr. Pritchard. That gentleman was assisting Captain Killick's sailing-master in navigating the ship; he came down from the quarter-deck at once. The curtains were drawn before the cabin windows, and the confabulation went on. It ended in this manner:—

Captain Killick turned to James Pritchard and said, "If you know all this, why have you never turned it to your own advantage?"

"Because I wish to turn it to the advantage of others

—to the advantage of those who have been kind to me; Lord Marcus here, for instance, and Captain and Mrs. Smythe."

"What do you know of the Smythes?" asked Killick.

"They were kind to me, that is all; and I could not do it alone. I wanted Lord Marcus. I could never have kept a foreign crew in order without him, and an English crew would have understood every word we said. Now, we have failed, and have come across you. You are the man to do it."

"In the end, however," said Captain Killick, "your objects are merely mercenary. Lord Marcus here, as I understand you, was to have been merely your tool. Now you want me. I am a tool with a cutting edge, and so, play no fool's tricks with me. I want ultimate proofs of this matter. I do not want to be made a fool of. I am rich, but I do not see why some others should not be richer."

They retired into Captain Killick's cabin. When they came out again James Pritchard was adjusting his braces, and Captain Killick had something in his hand

which puzzled the on-looking steward—something which shone like a star.

They were very little time at Valparaiso, only sufficient to coal there, which was done in twenty-four hours. Captain Killick wrote home to Mrs. Smythe a singularly short letter, to Mabel a longer one, containing such things as a lover writes to his *fiancée*. The gist of the letter to Mrs. Smythe was simply a *résumé* of the one he had written from Valdivia—that he had got Clare, who was quite well, and that he was going to make for Melbourne and come home that way. He gave no reason for his most singular determination.

They cleared for Melbourne, but they were never heard of there. Ships came and went three or four times between Callao and Melbourne, but they brought no news of the *Snake*. It was perfectly obvious, both at Melbourne and Callao, that the *Snake* had struck on a reef, and was lost.

CHAPTER XXXII.

CAPTAIN SMYTHE'S RETURN.

CAPTAIN SMYTHE had arrived home and had reported himself at once to the Port-Admiral; he met with an extremely cool reception, and was informed that he must stand his court-martial in a week's time.

For that he was prepared of course, and he knew that it would go hard with him. He had heard no news which he cared to hear for a long time, and he felt that he was getting seriously ill. It was with a sickening heart that he knocked at his own door in London; he had telegraphed to his wife from Southampton, but had received no answer.

The door was opened by a footman. This rather surprised him. "Is your mistress at home?" he asked, and the answer was "Yes." He was shown into his own drawing-room; he hardly knew it; the furniture

was his certainly, but the nick-nacks and china belonged to some one else. He had hardly time to notice these facts when a strange lady, beautifully dressed, glided into the room, and stood with astonishment depicted plainly on her handsome good-humoured countenance.

"I beg your pardon," she said, "the man said it was Sir George Hetherington, whom I expected."

"No, madam, I am Captain Smythe."

"My landlord!" she exclaimed. "Why, my dear sir, we thought that you were dead. Welcome to your own house, a thousand times welcome."

"But madam, where are my wife and children?"

"They are at Greenwich," she said with surprise, not realizing that he knew nothing; "and I saw her last week when I paid her my rent. She is very ill, and must be moved. Why what a foolish person I am! she has heard nothing from you; so you, of course, have heard nothing from her. She begins to believe you to be dead."

"Good heavens! but why is she at Greenwich?"

"Why, you see," said Mrs. Aubrey, "you did not leave her any money; at least, so my friend her brother

told me, and she had to let this house to me and go into lodgings."

"I left her five thousand pounds!" said Smythe aghast. "Robert must have known that."

"Well, I cannot understand it. You had better go to her at once; or, stay, that would be rather sudden: let me go with you and break the good news to her, will not that be better?"

"It would indeed—but—"

"But you mean you dislike troubling me. We will talk of that another time." She rang the bell, and when the man came, ordered her carriage instantly, and bade him bring some wine.

"For you are ill and overdone," she said; "your face is pinched, and you are shivering. You have strangely enough brought the first news of your own safety, unless the *Globe* has come."

It was on the hall table, and she brought it. Sure enough there was the news, only four or five lines stating the truth, and three more containing the highest praise of himself.

They drove towards Greenwich, and Mrs. Aubrey

told him everything which she knew about his wife and daughter; how nobly Mrs. Smythe had borne up against everything, and how heroically Mabel was behaving: at the end of the street she left him and went on foot to Mrs. Smythe's lodgings.

Things had gone on from bad to worse with that good lady; she had disliked troubling her brother for money, and the housekeeping had suffered in consequence. She had denied herself many things which were necessary for her, to keep the children well. Mabel and she had many long conferences together about ways and means, not always successful. Mabel had grown shabby, not untidy, and their landlady, Miss Rossiter, was very hard on them. Mrs. Smythe never moved out of the house, her health would not permit it. She dreaded the rapidly approaching day when she would have to go into mourning, but she stoutly refused to do anything of the kind as yet.

Mrs. Aubrey paid her rent royally, but it was all gone as soon as it was received. Mabel and the children were subdued and quiet, and yet she was so nervous that she was glad when they were in bed. Things had

been at the worst with her for so long that she was calmly resigned to them; she was incapable of action, and so did nothing. A doctor would have been of great service to her, but she could not afford to pay one. She let things drive, and never held up her hand.

She was in this state one afternoon, lying on the sofa looking at the river, when Mabel came to her, and said that some one wished to speak to her; turning round she saw Mrs. Aubrey, and wished her elsewhere.

"I am sorry to disturb you, Mrs. Smythe," she said, "but the fact is that I must ask you to get up and come with me on very important business."

"Have they put an execution in your house?" said Mrs. Smythe. "My brother will pay that. Let us go to him at once. I have been dreading this." She rose, and bade Mabel fetch her walking things.

"No! nothing of the kind has happened. I want you to come down into the parlour alone."

Mrs. Smythe rose, and walked steadily downstairs. When they were alone together, Mrs. Smythe said: "I suppose the end has come?"

"*Exactly*," said Mrs. Aubrey; "now do take it

like a brave woman, for it seems to me that he is very ill."

"Who?"

"Why, your husband. You want every energy of which you are possessed. Do brace yourself up to it, for your children's sake as well as your own. Shall I fetch him?"

She nodded, and stood against the chimney-piece. Mrs. Aubrey ran to the end of the street, brought Captain Smythe, pushed him into the parlour, shut the door, and with one word of caution to Mabel, left the house and drove away. Mabel did not know what had happened, but doing as she was told, went upstairs and kept Ethel and Matilda quiet.

In half-an-hour she heard her mother's voice clear and quiet as of old, calling at the bottom of the stairs, "Mabel, bring down your sisters. Your father is come home, and he wants to see you."

She came down with them. Her mother gave her and the children the caution that they were to be very quiet, and they were so. When they came into the room they did not know him; he kissed them, and sent them away again.

An attorney was fetched, who did what was necessary and he was followed by a doctor. There was money enough now, and the best physicians were had from London, but it seemed that all the money and all the doctors in the world could not help Captain Smythe just now.

That night he was delirious, but in his delirium he only harped on one theme—his court-martial. He kept on asking for Captain Killick, and said that, if he had not given him some chart, he would have been safe. He harped so persistently on this one theme, that a doctor, wise in his generation, said that this delusion would outlast the fever, and that he would remain mad over it. Another doctor, however, took quite a different view of the case; he examined the delirious man on the subject of this chart, and came to the conclusion that Captain Smythe, although highly excited, knew perfectly well what he was talking about, and that, if he could only remember it all when he got well, it would be for the benefit of navigation.

Meanwhile Mrs. Smythe had got perfectly well with most singular rapidity, and forgot all about her late troubles in her present ones.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

COURT-MARTIAL.

CAPTAIN SMYTHE'S life hung in the balance for a long time, and of course the court-martial was indefinitely deferred; but his constitution triumphed over everything, and the day of recovery and the day of trial could neither be deferred.

He was assisted in preparing his defence by a brilliant young officer of his own training, who, as Mabel suspected, would gladly have changed places with Captain Killick in his relations to her. He did his best, but it was useless; there were one or two men in the court who disliked Captain Smythe and his whole school as go-ahead, pushing, enterprising officers, who would not let matters alone, and gave endless trouble. One of the most offensively active of them had come to grief, and they were not sorry for it.

Captain Smythe was asked for his sword. He replied simply that he had none; that he had lost it with his ship.

The charge against him was that he had deliberately put his ship's head the wrong way when entering the harbour of St. Juan in a gale of wind; that he had steered his ship straight on to a bar of rocks laid down on the Admiralty chart which was before him, and did then and there lose the ship with certain of her people.

The evidence was conclusive against him; not a man could speak for him. Even the intrepid Darrel, who had calmly told his own captain that he would swear to anything for him if it were any use, was forced to go against him. There seemed no hope, and enemies wondered what defence he would set up, and his friends felt disconsolate.

His defence was very simple, and took every one utterly by surprise. He respectfully submitted to the court that the rocks laid down on the Admiralty chart did not exist, whereas the rocks on which he was wrecked were laid down in the Admiralty chart as clear water; of that he was ready to take his oath from the

most carefully made observations taken since the wreck, the memoranda of which he had brought home with him. In the confusion arising from the wreck and his subsequent travelling and illness, he said that his mind had been in a partial state of oblivion about the circumstances, but his mind was clear now; and such was the state of the case. He was absolutely certain about the non-existence of those rocks, and his judgment had been borne out by the result. The other reef which had ruined him was not laid down; therefore, he added, the whole and entire blame rested with the incompetent officer who had made the survey and not with himself.

How did he know of the non-existence of those rocks, which were laid so clearly down in the Admiralty chart?

From a corrected chart left him by a late officer of the Royal Mail service.

"Then," said one of his enemies, "you preferred the chart of an unknown commander in the merchant service to the authorized chart of the Admiralty, by which you were instructed to sail?"

"Indubitably," said Captain Smythe with the greatest coolness. "I had studied both charts, and I knew both

the men who had made them. I knew the one to be an incompetent person, who had only been in the place once for three days; and I knew the other, the Royal Mail man, to be a highly trained, scientific sailor, who had put into the gulf very many times in rough weather. In a moment of extreme danger I did the best I could think of for my ship's company, and gave the order now sworn to by the witnesses. I passed over the rocks marked in the Admiralty chart, and was wrecked five miles to leeward of them on a spot which that same chart gives as open water with ten fathoms. The man who made that chart should be tried, not I."

His friends were surprised at the ability of his defence; but it was all no use; there was only his *ipse dixit* for it all.

He was recalled after an hour and had his sentence read to him; he was to lose three years' seniority and be severely reprimanded, which was accordingly done with extreme pleasure by the president, who was one of his greatest enemies.

He returned quite quietly to his saddened house, and having announced the fact to his family took no more

notice of it one way or another, but commenced a severe course of scientific study.

Two days after the finding of the court martial, theirs was the happiest house in London. He had moved his family back to a pleasanter house in Pimlico, and he used every morning to walk up to his own house to fetch such letters as might have come there for him; one morning he got the letter which Captain Killick had written from Valparaiso. (The Valdivia letter turned up about six months afterwards, nearly illegible from salt water.) Clare was safe and well.

Opposite the Admiralty, as he was striding along, he met three officers arm-in-arm, one of whom was the president of his court-martial. He looked so radiantly happy that his enemy was greatly disappointed. "What new slice of luck has that fellow got hold of now?" he growled to the other two.

So the peaceful time glided away, and yet they heard nothing more of Captain Killick or Clare. "Why did he not write from Melbourne?" said Captain Smythe to himself frequently. The reason was quite plain to those who were in the secret; they never went near Melbourne

at all, though they had at first intended to do so; they were expected at Melbourne, and when they were not heard of at that port or at any other, the colonists and the Chilians gave them up for lost. The rumour reached Captain Smythe's ears, but he carefully kept it to himself; it was extremely unlikely that such a sailor as Killick should make a fiasco in running across the Pacific with only two islands, Easter and Norfolk, in his probable route; still, when it was announced in the shipping intelligence that all hope had been given up at Melbourne, gloom fell upon the household again, and it was poor Mabel's turn to pine and wear away; her attention to her mother in their previous troubles was repaid tenfold.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE MYSTERY OF PELSART'S ISLAND IS SOLVED AT LAST.

BEFORE leaving Valparaiso a careful selection was made among the men, Lord Marcus naming one, and Captain Killick another, until the crew was reduced one half; the others were paid off, and allowed handsome passage money to England.

The present crew, composed of one-half of Lord Marcus's South of Ireland sailors, and one-half of Killick's picked men-of-warsmen, were not apparently selected for their good looks or their superior seamanship (they were all good), but for a quality which was a *sine qua non* with the two owners—trustworthiness, and good humour. With these men on board, well coaled and provisioned they sailed away, and when off Easter Island had a consultation—*it was determined not to make Melbourne or any other large port at all*, but make at once

for Pelsart's Island; it was a very long voyage, but they were perfectly fit for it.

This had happened: Lord Marcus had confided the secret of Pelsart's Island to Captain Killick on condition of being taken there, and a certain agreement was come to between them and James Pritchard.

Their voyage was extremely favourable; they put into Norfolk Island, and got water, vegetables, and fresh meat from the islanders, the descendants of the mutineers of the *Bounty;* it was rather out of their course, but they wished *to be by themselves.* They sailed down the east coast of Australia, the land with its pleasant farms and towns provokingly in sight; turning westward, they passed Wilson's Promontory, and left the land again, only sighting it once more at Cape Lenuin after a fast run of 1,200 miles. Two days more saw them snugly anchored at the old ground at Pelsart's Island.

They determined to lose no time, and act coolly as if nothing was the matter. Lord Marcus would go bail for his Irishmen with his life; and Captain Killick had been overheard to say to Pritchard that he was so anxious to

get home to marry Mr. Clare Smythe's sister, that if they made a decent passage he intended to make the men a present of twenty pounds apiece; of course they were not such idiots as not to see that there was something in the wind which was no business of theirs; but it was unanimously and tacitly agreed that it was bad manners to talk about it.

Captain Killick, Lord Marcus, Clare, and Pritchard took the gig by themselves, next morning, and rowed on shore. They took with them a large leather bag and two spades, and with nothing else they disappeared behind the sand-hills.

"Now," said Lord Marcus, "I am dying to know the great secret. I hunted over every inch of the ground, and *I* could find nothing."

"I took uncommonly good care that neither you nor any one else should," said Pritchard. "When I first found the boxes the sand had been blown from them, and each one was standing on a pyramid of sand, as you have seen common stones in the desert. Any human being, the most careless, would have seen them a long way off. Mine happened to be the first footstep which

had passed that way, after they were uncovered by the wind. Since they were buried it is evident that the scrub has grown up and directed the wind in one way. I at once, seeing the way in which the sand was drifting, moved them all except the smallest into the lee of that belt of scrub, while I put in this stake to mark the spot. I buried them about a foot deep, and you see that the sand has not deceived me, it has drifted over them, falling in the rear of the scrub. We shall find the six boxes under that heap of sand. The smallest of all, the seventh, I broke open some years ago with your axe, Lord Marcus; you know the result."

Clare and James Pritchard began digging stoutly.

"Bear a hand, cousin," said James Pritchard.

"Cousin!" said Clare, pausing.

"It is only a way we have of talking among one another at sea," said James Pritchard.

Clare thought no more about it, though he had never heard that term of endearment used among sailors before. Pritchard never made such a mistake again, and Clare never knew until years afterwards that Pritchard was his own first cousin.

One hour's easy digging and they came on the first box. It was a strong oak box, about a foot long, eight inches wide, and the same deep, hooped with iron. Captain Killick quickly forced it open with a wedge and hammer which he had brought with him. It was three-quarters full of gold moidores, on the top of which lay a small leather bag, which he untied, and emptied the contents on his handkerchief. What were the contents?

Ten rubies as large as your fore-finger nail, and an emerald as large as a stout man's thumb. They looked at one another and said nothing. As Captain Killick pointed out, there was nearly £1,800 lying on his pocket-handkerchief.

The mystery of Pelsart's Island was solved. James Pritchard had discovered these boxes when a convict, and had guessed the value of them by the smallest of them which he had broken open with Lord Marcus's axe. The money which he had got from the sale of what he found there he had not spent badly, for he helped Mrs. Smythe when she sorely needed it. The original lazy want of energy, the great fault of his character, prevented his acting energetically about the matter,

and so Lord Marcus D'Este heard a little, and at last, after many years, James Pritchard simply drifted by a series of accidents into the revelation of the whole facts of his singular discovery, for the value of which even he was totally unprepared.

CHAPTER XXXV.

CONCLUSION.

THE *Danais*, the ship which was sent out to search for the survivors of the *Warhawk* was, if slow, sure. She met with a chapter of accidents so long that we cannot write it down here. She, however, contrived to keep on the surface of the water, not by her own merits, but from the fact that she was commanded by a first-class captain of the Smythe type, with officers and crew to match.

He made all haste to the Gulf of St. Juan, and so was there not many months after the wreck. He examined the whole scene carefully, and before proceeding into the Pacific wrote a despatch which he sent home by the *Fantome*, then relieved from her three years' service at Melbourne.

The conclusion of the despatch was this :—

"A more disgraceful piece of hydrography than the present chart of the Gulf of St. Juan does not exist. Captain Smythe's ship lies upon rocks which are marked in the chart as carrying ten fathoms. The Dolphin Rocks do not exist at all."

Captain Smythe's character as a sailor was half-cleared by this, but what did it matter? Clare and Killick were lost, and there seemed no hope of ever seeing them again; Mabel was losing her health; and Mrs. Smythe was once more beginning to despair. Was it possible that Killick had been unable to take his yacht across the Pacific? Was Clare never to be with him again?

He used to go up to his own house, now in the occupation of Mrs. Aubrey, very often, to see what letters had been left there. One morning she, met him in the hall, with a letter in her hand. He saw that it bore the Cape postmark, and he was going to tear it open.

"Do not open it yet," she said in great agitation. "I want you to go into the other room first; I hardly know what I say. Go in there."

He obeyed mechanically. He had scarcely opened the door when Captain Killick and Clare laid hold of him, both talking at once.

. . . . . .

It was all over. His ship had come home, and every being he cared about in the world was safe. I pass over the scene which followed. Under such circumstances one man behaves much like another.

Two men were in that room whom he did not recognize—Lord Marcus D'Este and James Pritchard. Lord Marcus introduced himself before Captain Killick had a chance, as an Irishman more mad than the rest of his fellow-countrymen. Killick solemnly confirmed this statement, and they all laughed at the joke, poor as it was. Then came the trial.

James Pritchard was presented to his uncle. Captain Smythe did not in the least degree recognize him, and Killick and Lord Marcus breathed more freely.

What remains to be told? Little or nothing. The Smythes were profoundly happy for a time, though as a united family with three active sailors in it, they have even now quite enough to give them anxiety.

Captain Killick claimed the hand of Mabel, and having wealth greater than he had before, with considerable Parliamentary influence, he devoted the period of his courtship to leading the Admiralty such a life that they reversed the sentence of the court-martial on Captain Smythe, and offered Captain Killick the last new ship, which he declined commanding, on the ground that she was no better than a tea-kettle. The difference between Captain Killick and the British Admiralty continues to this day, and it is supposed by well-informed persons will only end by the death of that gallant officer or a revolution. Mabel has always shown high fighting powers, and backs up her husband most loyally. It must not be supposed, however, that Captain Killick refuses to serve his country. He is always afloat, and in fact my lords are never easy when he is on shore.

The settlements which he made on Mabel astonished even her father, and when he presented her before their marriage with fourteen thousand pounds' worth of jewels, Captain Smythe could only say that he hoped that Captain Killick could afford them, but that he was

not the man to stand in his child's light. The mystery of Pelsart's Island was studiously kept from him. He was one of those *preux chevalier* men who might, in his extreme loyalty, have raised a question about "treasure trove," and handed the whole "find" over to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for the sole use of Her Majesty. Captain Smythe is in utter ignorance of the whole matter.

Lord Marcus D'Este was very quickly introduced to the family. He immediately, publicly, and on the spot, proposed marriage to Ethel, before he had been in the room five minutes. Great laughter followed, and Ethel told him to say the same thing two years after. Oddly enough he did so; and Ethel is Lady Marcus D'Este, and will almost certainly be Lady Dunorrin. Whether she becomes a countess or not, she has got the kindest, gentlest, and best of husbands. He does not travel much now; he generally makes a run to the Rocky Mountains or the Saskatchewan in the summer, leaving her at Denver, Sioux City, or Ottawa, while he goes hunting. Last summer he went up to the Mackenzie River

salmon fishing, and so missed joining the Arctic expedition; but he is a man who never goes very far from his home.

Captain Smythe and Clare are pretty much at sea, gaining golden opinions. When Clare is at home he is in immense request among his nephews and nieces. He can tell them many stories, but the stories they like best of all are about Patagonia—about the two chiefs, one of whom was his friend though he was unkind to him, and the other who would have murdered him though he pretended to be kind. Pashlickyauk is the subject of many prayers among Mabel's younger children. Let us hope that he will profit by them, for heaven knows he needs to.

In a quiet corner of the garden of the house at Southsea, where Mrs. Smythe and Mrs. Killick live together, waiting for their husbands to come home, there is a slab, and on it is written—

"LION,
The first English dog which ever crossed
The Patagonian Cordillera.
As he was faithful in life,
So he is remembered in death."

A quiet young man is often seen about the Smythes' house, when not travelling. He is a general favourite there, and whenever Captain Smythe and he happen to be at home together, Captain Smythe has great talks with him, as one of the great theoretical sailors of the age. Lord Marcus and Captain Killick know who he is, but no one else does. Clare likes to listen to his dreamy theories, though he thinks that his father ranks his practical abilities too high. Mrs. Smythe always remembers her nephew, who helped her when she was so hard pushed, in her prayers; but she never dreams, any more than her husband, that the handsome man who sometimes takes her into dinner is no other than the innocent convict who disgraced them so.

So the discoverer of the mystery of Pelsart's Island has a mystery of his own more wonderful than the other. And if you look into your own heart, you may possibly find a secret there, to which the discovery of a few boxes of jewels is nothing.

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